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Official Magazine - Australia

JUNE ISSUE 2009
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STOP PRESS!

FIGHT NIGHT ROUND 4

Iron Mike vs. 'The Man' Mundine?!

DISSECTED!

MODERN WARFARE 2

The debut teaser under the microscope!

RATED!

BLOOD SPORT

UFC 2009: How the best
in biff murders WWE!

VERDICT!

ENTER SANDMAN

Guitar Hero: Metallica
totally thrashed!

EXCLUSIVE FIRST-LOOK!

ASSASSIN'S CREED II

The killer sequel that's ripping the Renaissance a new one!

More freedom - More fighting - More flying machines?

FIRST REVIEW!

RED FACTION GUERRILLA

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ISSUE 31 JUNE 2009
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INSIDE: ASHES CRICKET 2009, GHOSTBUSTERS, WOLVERINE & LEGO ROCK BAND



Metallica and 21 other bands are coming to Guitar Hero.

 XBOX 360^{LIVE}

PLAYSTATION 3

PlayStation 2



Wii



Infrequent
Coarse
Language

*Drum Kit Controller and Microphone available separately in Guitar Hero World Tour Complete Band Game.
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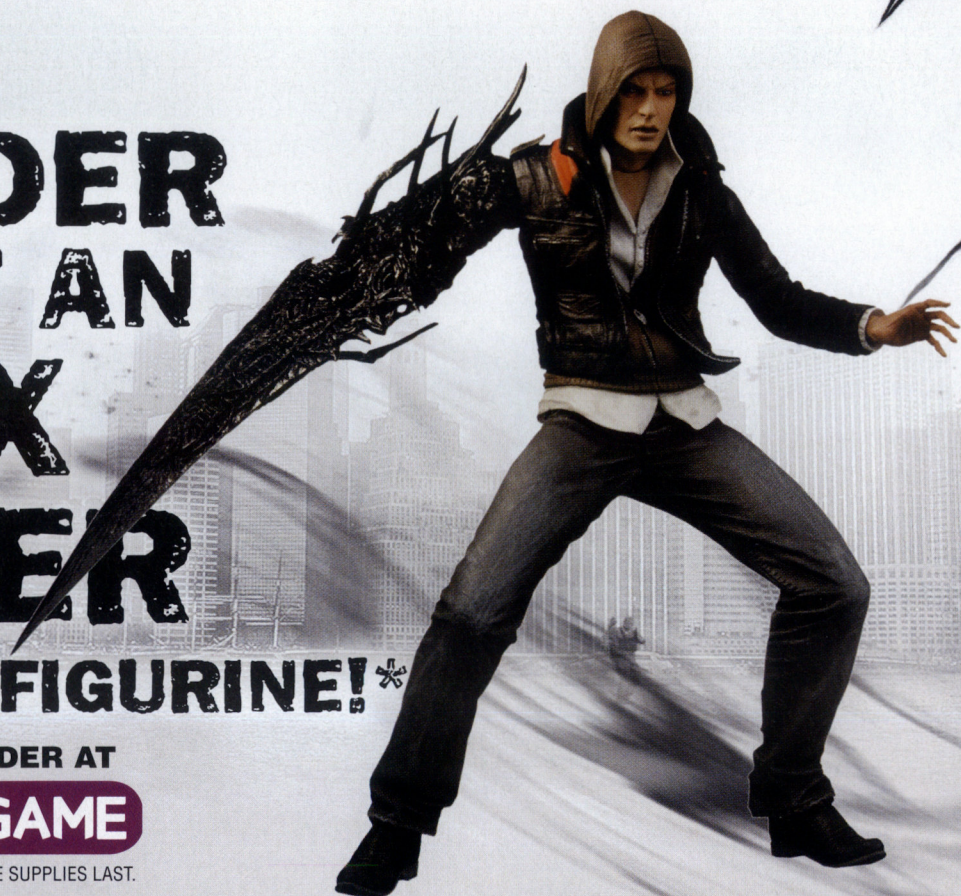
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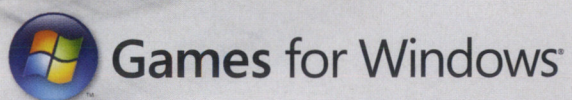


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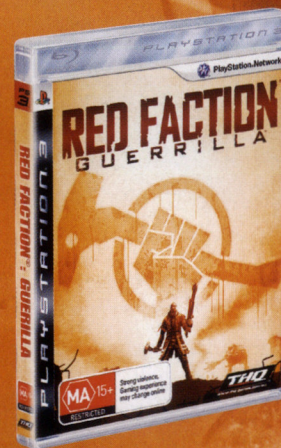
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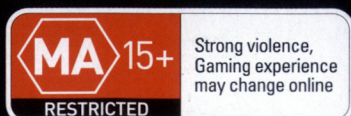


PLAYSTATION 3

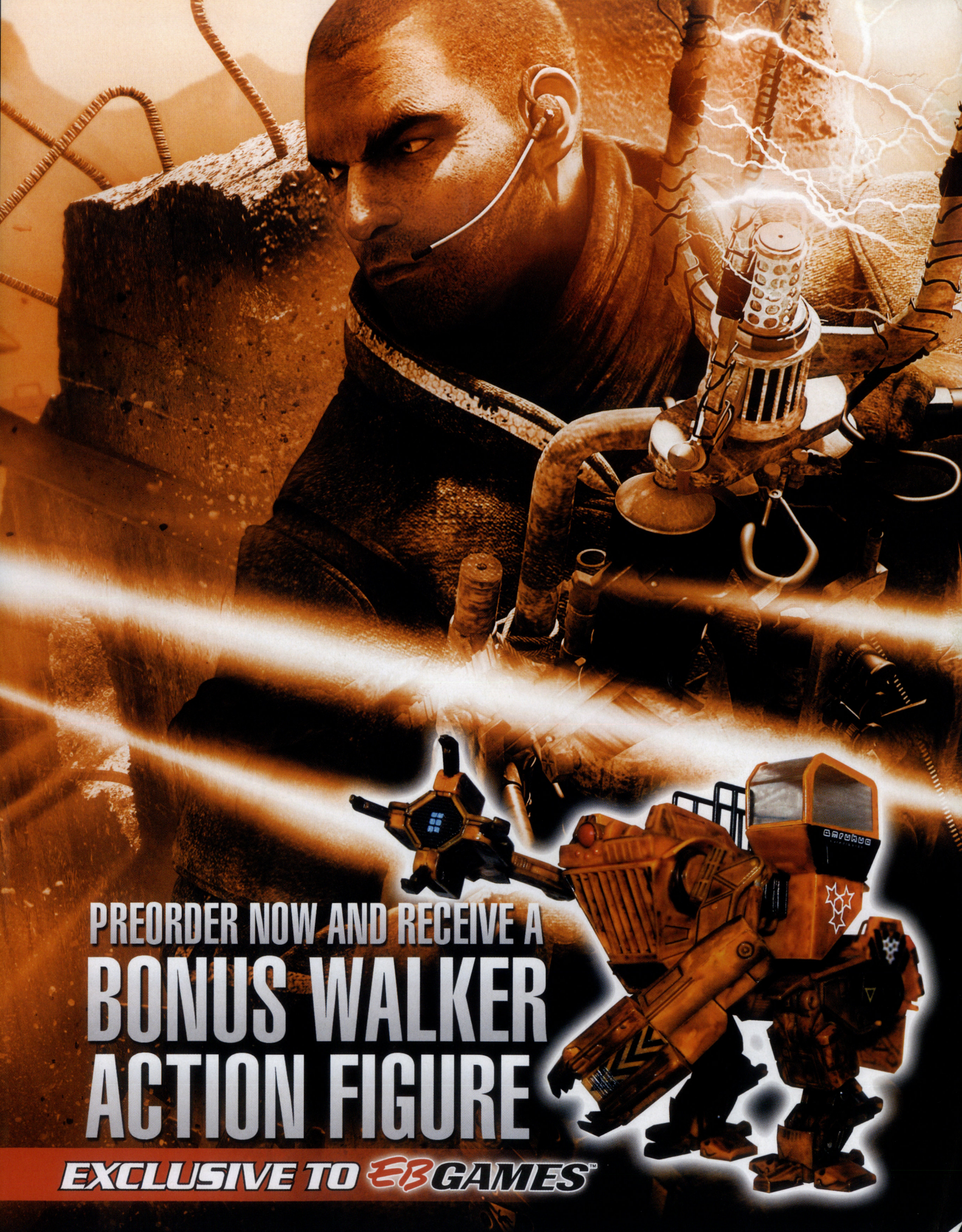


XBOX 360

XBOX LIVE



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BATMAN: ARKHAM ASYLUM

Hands-on with the best Batman game we've played! Page 36

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“Our main focus is diversity in each aspect of the game: more variety in missions and objectives, more variety in gameplay, more weapons, more diverse assassinations, and deep character progressions”

Sébastien Puel, *Assassin's Creed II* producer



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Back to make a killing

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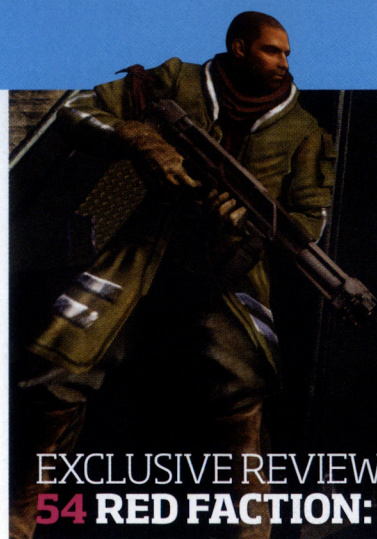
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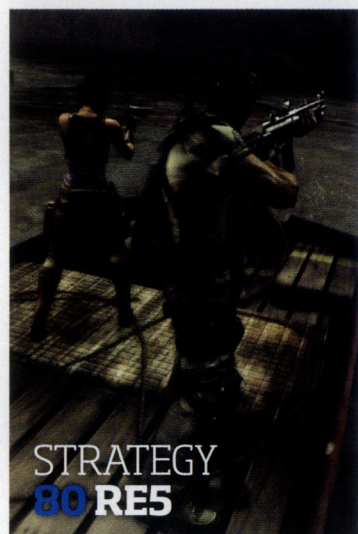
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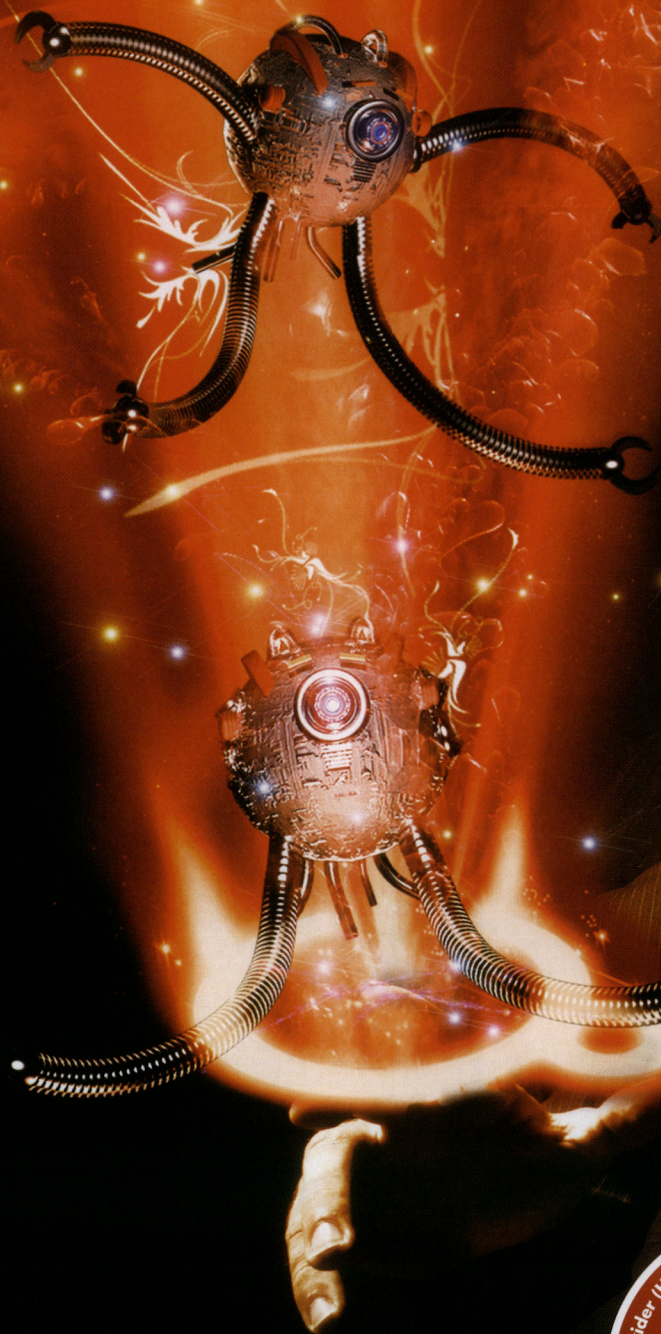
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COLLEGE



Here's a question: why do even the greatest games vanish eventually? Are gamers really so brutally unforgiving? The film industry celebrates its old wares. Every year studios delve deep into their vast archives and resurface grasping all manner of behind-the-scenes junk, deleted sequences and alternate endings. They lasso surviving cast members and crew and squeeze interviews and commentaries out of them.

They stuff in sackfuls of old promo content. Then they whack it all on a DVD, slap it on the arse and fling it out to retailers around the world and wait for the coin to cascade back into the mothership. Take a look at the range of films available in stores today. Almost everything you could want. All the classics are covered.

Take a look at the range of games. If it wasn't released in the past year or two, good luck. Pre-owned doesn't count; it doesn't disprove the fact games are abandoned by publishers in a way movies are not.

You can download PSone games to your PS3 from the PSN these days – but they're placed up there as curiosities. They're not celebrated in the way a newly remastered film is.

If you want to claim games ARE art, then we need to stop treating them so differently. Imagine an alternate, low price range of games on PS3 – 'remastered' classics, with interviews, and special features that dig into the story behind the game itself.

Would they sell? Probably not that well.

Yeah, forget I mentioned it.

LUKE REILLY
EDITOR

PSN: Capt_Flashheart **PLAYING:** ROCK BAND 2 **WANTING:** MAX PAYNE 3

EDITORIAL & DESIGN

EDITOR:

Luke Reilly
luke@derwenthoward.com.au

DEPUTY EDITOR:

Paul Taylor

CONTRIBUTORS:

James Ellis, James Cottee, Anthony O'Connor, Toby McCasker, Dylan Burns, Amy Flower, Adam Mathew, David Kozicki

ART DIRECTOR:

Stephanie Goh

CREATIVE DIRECTOR:

Paul Cook

PUBLISHING & CIRCULATION

MANAGING DIRECTOR:

Nick Cutler

CIRCULATION ENQUIRIES:

(02) 8305 6900

PRODUCTION MANAGER:

Graham Hood

ADVERTISING & MARKETING

GROUP SALES MANAGER:

Alex Brereton
alex@derwenthoward.com.au
(02) 8305 6909

ADVERTISING COORDINATOR:

Tammy Collins

MARKETING MANAGER:

Vanessa Morgan

HOW TO CONTACT US:

TEL: (02) 8305 6900

FAX: (02) 8305 6999

EMAIL: ops@derwenthoward.com.au

Derwent Howard Pty Ltd

P.O. Box 1037

Bondi Junction NSW 1355

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MANAGEMENT

DIRECTORS:

Jim Flynn, Nathan Berkley

FINANCE DIRECTOR:

Sandy Barnes

MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTANT:

Stuart Harle

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SHOUT OUTS: KJR :: Vinnie :: Nicole :: Joel Graham :: Tony Hawk :: BallZac :: Sparrow :: Lloyd's Plutonium Pink :: Elissa @ www.edesign101.com.au

OPS ON: GAMES AS ART



STEPHANIE GOH

Development studios employ dozens and dozens of artists. Are we to believe the end result of their work is not art? What is it then?

PSN: TBA

Playing: The Chronicles: Assault on Dark Athena

Wanting: Terminator Salvation



PAUL TAYLOR

For me, it's all about thumping down the freeway in Liberty City at dusk. Magic. If that's not enough for art pundits then I just don't know what to say.

PSN: paulgusta

Playing: Far Cry 2

Wanting: BioShock 2



JAMES COTTEE

Anybody who claims videogames simply cannot be art has never played Patapon. Simple. Somebody crafted these little guys, and they look better than a soup can.

PSN: DrWho3987

Playing: Patapon 2

Wanting: Batman: AA



JAMES ELLIS

Art schmart. Do we really want to be lumped in with these wine and cheese windbags anyway? This debate will likely fester for some time, why stress out about it?

PSN: gtfaster49

Playing: Street Fighter IV

Wanting: NG Sigma 2



Gaming's latest and greatest

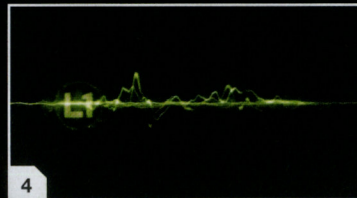
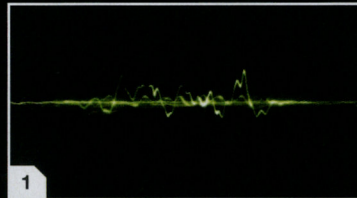
THIS MEANS

The *Modern Warfare 2* trailer explained!

At first glance, there might seem there's not much to glean from Infinity Ward's slick new trailer for *Modern Warfare 2*. Look closer, however, and you'll discover quite a bit. It's just a teaser, so its job is really more to excite than inform (something apparently lost on the always vocal sea of internet morons who have their panties in a twist because it doesn't feature any gameplay), but we've analysed every frame. Here's what we came up with.

Things kick off with the Infinity Ward logo. We'll be the first to admit Treyarch did a superlative job with *World at War*, but IW is back. There's some kind of green night-vision goggles thing going on, with audio visualization.

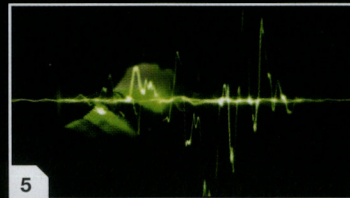
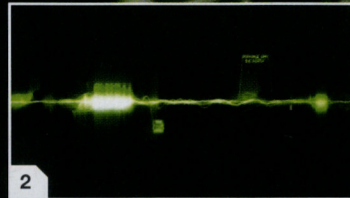
1: We hear car horns honking. The action starts outside, but the sound of an automatic door opening is heard and we move inside. We think we may have heard some Japanese outside, but inside there's some English muttering. We clearly hear the word 'subway'.



2: Ah, it's an airport - a message comes over the PA system: "Attention customers, please do not leave bags unattended." A flight is called; we can't make out the number. An elevator is called. Ding!

3: Three silhouettes can be seen filing into the elevator. Three guys. They look like they're in suits, or at least suit jackets. The door closes.

4: A bag is dropped, and a zipper is opened. The camera is a fourth man. There's bustling movement inside the elevator. Some kind of preparation is



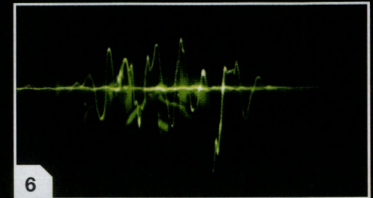
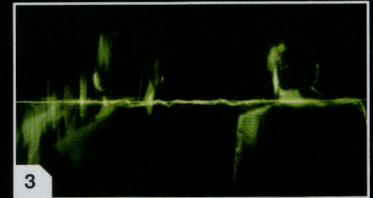
underway, but what kind? Military, or something more sinister? L1 flashes on screen.

5: A watch is checked. M flashes.

6: An SMG is cocked. 1, first floor.

7: Preparations are over, these guys are fast. There's silence, then a cough. For the first time, somebody speaks. It's in Russian: "God is with us." Almost immediately, however, the same voice speaks again, this time in English - like he caught himself slipping up: "Remember, no Russian." No Russian? He doesn't want his crew speaking Russian. They're terrorists, surely? But they don't want to be identified as being Russian. Is this a frame-up? 2, second floor. They've arrived.

8: The doors open and they leave the lift. The second floor seems far busier than where they originally entered. More human shapes are visible in the green and black background, and it's louder. Interestingly, to the top right we can see what appear to be 'Perk' icons. The first one appears to be 'Stopping



Power', but the others seem new. A winged foot, crossed knives and an odd circle symbol. You don't get much time to look before the gunfire erupts with a crescendo of drums and screaming.

9: The last few moments of the trailer are montages of various scenes we expect will be part of the finished game. Two fighter jet shoot past, F-15s by the look of them. There's some kind of tank or armoured vehicle on the bottom right.

10: There seems to be snow in the centre. A snow level? There's a paratrooper on the top left. Could be anyone. Most military branches have paratroop regiments.

11: We can clearly see inside a plane here, a commercial airliner. The SAS mission for the epilogue of *COD4* was inside a plane - are they connected? We can also see choppers, they're MH-6 Little Birds by the look of it. You might remember them from the film *Black Hawk Down*. This means they're likely 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment choppers, an elite





15 Where to Now?

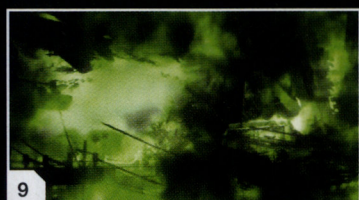
Many of us have very fond memories of the original *Driver*, which makes it all the more painful it's MIA right now. Check out a few ideas for its future.



18 Around the World in PS3

Free ecstasy with pre-owned GTA, proof gaming can improve your eyesight, disturbing stats that some men would rather game than shag, and more!

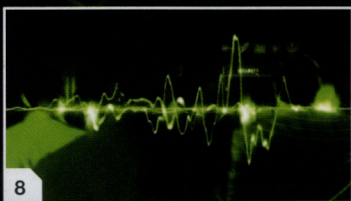
WAR



squadron of the US army used to ferry special forces operators, like Delta.

12: There's speculation that the statue-like figure in the top left corner is the giant Jesus perched above Rio de Janeiro - but it could be a tail rotor.

13: Another chopper, looks like a Black Hawk this time - used by everyone, from the US army Rangers to the Australian SAS, so no clues there. There's also a teddy bear (these appears in the multiplayer levels of *COD4* and a scuba diver. Could be a US Navy SEAL, or perhaps an SBS operator (the Special Boat Service is an independent unit of the UK Royal Marines who specialise in the recovery or protection of ships and oil installations and other maritime



counter-terrorism). We're just guessing here.

14: There are some large ships in the background. Whatever is going on it's a big deal.

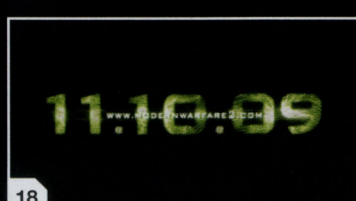
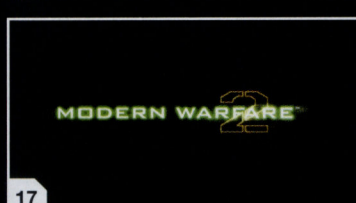
15: You can spot the conning tower of a submarine in the centre, and the hard-to-make-out figure on the right had a US flag shoulder patch.

16: An oil rig? Interesting. There's a castle in the top right too. Even more interesting.

17: That's it. *Modern Warfare 2*. It appears IW and Activision have dropped the *Call of Duty* brand for this. *Modern Warfare* is now a spin-off?

18: Coming November 10 - don't be confused by the fruity way Yanks write dates.

Are you excited now? Because we are.



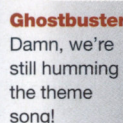
WHAT'S HOT OR NOT

Too hot to handle? Or too cold to hold?

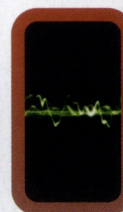


The Ostrich Hammer

Well done, Volition, well done

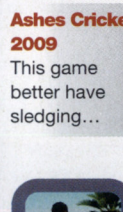


Ghostbusters
Damn, we're still humming the theme song!



Modern Warfare 2 teaser

Man, so cryptic!

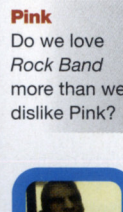


Ashes Cricket 2009
This game better have sledging...



Godfather II

Charttopper? Is everyone's taste in their arse?



Pink
Do we love Rock Band more than we dislike Pink?



GTA: Lost and Damned

Yeah, we're still pissed about this, okay?

IN SHORT...



The game that keeps giving, *Burnout Paradise*, will host a plethora of hot new cars and a new mode, Cops and Robbers. No release date at this stage, but we're drooling.



Ashes Cricket 2009 will be here just in time for us to spank the Poms silly. It's being developed by Transmission in Victoria, but our interview with the team fell through at the last second.



LEGO Rock Band is now longer a rumour, it's a reality. Aimed at families, songs will include Blur 'Song 2', Carl Douglas 'Kung Fu Fighting', Europe 'The Final Countdown' and Pink 'So What'. Pink sucks so much.

SCREENTEST

BAD COMPANY

Love is a battlefield

The Director
Tony Scott

The Plot

Bad Company revolves around a four-man squad of misfits during a fictional war between the Russian Federation and the US in the 'near-future'. The squad is part of the B Company of the 222nd Army battalion, more commonly known as 'Bad Company' (the company is made up of insubordinates and troublemakers whose role on the front line is best described as cannon-fodder). When one of them discovers a solid gold bar on a dead mercenary they go AWOL and set about tracking down the source of it – a convoy full of stolen bullion – and stealing it.

The Pitch

Three Kings meets *Kelly's Heroes* meets *Stripes*: Less commentary, more comedy

Green Light or Development Hell?

This should be a total goer. We'd drop the *Battlefield* brand from the name, because it sounds kind of dopey and redundant when attached to a film. It'd be an expensive cast to secure, but if you could swing it, *Bad Company* would be sure-fire. A gold heist in the middle of a warzone? It's put bums on seats in the past, most recently

with *Three Kings*, and we're sure it'd work again. As long as they kept the comedy, hired the same sound guys DICE used to make *Battlefield*: *Bad Company* one of the best audio experiences on PS3, put a face to Miss July and made sure they was a scene where the four members of *Bad Company* were stuffed into a single golf cart, we'd predict a green light. Plus, there's plenty of sequel potential.

Best Line:

Haggard: "Is... is that a silencer? That's kinda girly."

The Cast:

Christian Bale the quietly confident new guy Preston
Brad Pitt as Southern explosive addict Haggard
Delroy Lindo as no-nonsense Sergeant Redford
Owen Wilson as the slightly docile Sweetwater
Zoey Deschanel as the deadpan Miss July



OSTRICHISED!

VOLITION GIVES RED FACTION FANS THE BIRD

An April Fools Day joke gone right has resulted in a truckload of good cheer and renewed hype for Volition's upcoming space shooter *Red Faction: Guerrilla*.

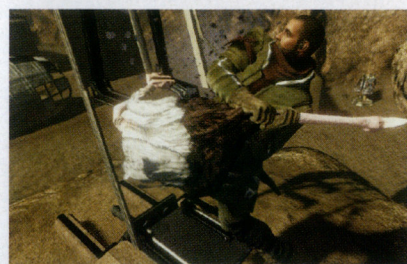
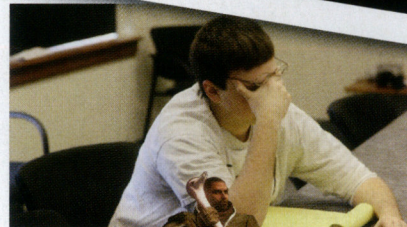
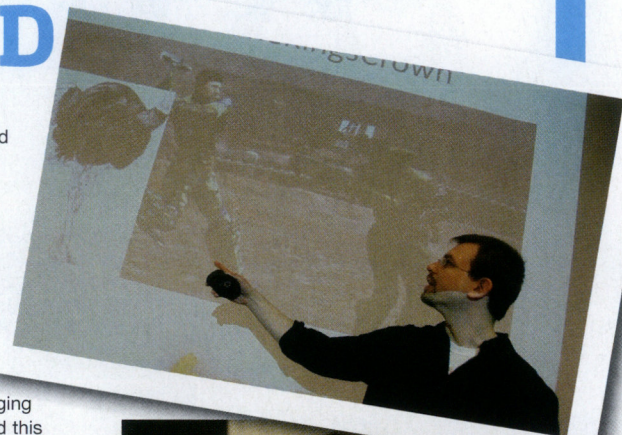
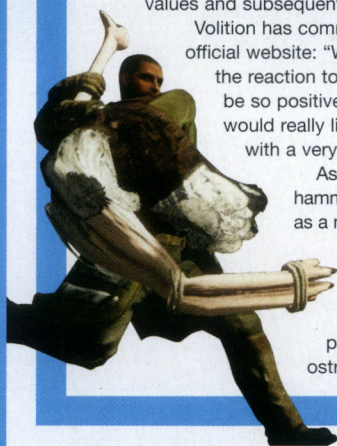
In February 2008 a handful of pre-alpha screenshots of *Red Faction: Guerrilla* were leaked to the web, and subsequently pulled to pieces. Some of the more notable criticism came from www.neogaf.com – where one poster crudely slotted in the bottom half of an ostrich below a swinging hammer. Over a year later, Volition used this as the basis of a hilarious 'behind-the-scenes' mockumentary video – in the style of *The Office* – just in time for April Fools Day.

The video chronicles the implementation of the 'ostrich hammer' in the multiplayer portion of the game, and takes viewers through a series of marketing-style meetings, culminating in a brainstorming session where options for a catchphrase are being tossed around (in our opinion, 'ostrichcised' and 'technical fowl' are narrowly beaten by 'bird f—ked').

It's rare to see a videogame developer taking the piss out of themselves, and even rarer to see it done with such good production values and subsequent success.

Volition has commented on its official website: "We had no idea the reaction to the video would be so positive and that gamers would really like to kill someone with a very large bird."

As a result, the ostrich hammer will be available as a multiplayer unlock when the game ships in June. Check out the review on page 54, or we'll ostrichcise you.



NUMBER CRUNCHING

140 million

The number of PS2s sold worldwide. The most of any console ever, and still climbing



SEPARATED AT BIRTH

NO. 4 Ziggy Stardust's final fantasy – David Bowie

This is a cheap one, because there's usually someone in every videogame who looks like David Bowie. We chose Sephiroth from *Final Fantasy VII* because everyone's always banging on about him – but David Bowie also looks like Albert Wesker from the *Resident Evil* series and Liquid Snake from *Metal Gear Solid*. Oh, and Poison, the crossdresser from *Final Fight*.

WHERE TO NOW?

The original *Driver* remains one of the best, and most successful, PSone games ever made - but the series has struggled ever since. We know there's another one being made, but everything else is a mystery. Here are our thoughts.



DRIVER: MIAMI

EXPLAIN YOURSELF...

The very first *Driver* city was Miami, so why not? We all know '80s Miami works anyway - look at *GTA: Vice City*. Naturally, we'd direct anybody who accused it of being a *GTA: Vice City* rip-off to *Scarface* and *Miami Vice*.

THE STORY

YOU are a retired cop and ex-stock car racer who's taken up a quiet hobby, like boat-building, in sunny '80s Miami when you're suddenly dragged back onto the force for one last job. Deep undercover you need to lay rubber all over town to get to the truth of whatever it is you're investigating. We didn't get that far at this stage.

HOW WILL IT PLAY?

It's *Driver*, so hopping out of the car and walking about should be thoroughly discouraged. Lots of fanging across town in Cadillacs and Caprices. All the characters should be wearing pastel colours.

PROBABILITY

Not bad, although we'd be surprised if it was set in the '80s.



DRIVER: SAN FRANCISCO

EXPLAIN YOURSELF...

Um, *Bullitt*. Is that enough?

THE STORY

YOU are a retired cop and ex-stock car racer who's opened up a small chowder diner in sunny '70s San Francisco when you're suddenly dragged back onto the force for one last job. Deep undercover you need to lay rubber all over town to get to the truth of whatever it is you're investigating. We didn't get that far with this one either.

HOW WILL IT PLAY?

It's *Driver*, so hopping out of the car and walking about should be thoroughly discouraged. Lots of fanging across town in Mustangs and Chargers. Cars should have unlimited hubcaps to fly off after landing from countless hill launches.

PROBABILITY

Decent, but probably not as great as we'd hope. This would be our number one choice, if only thanks to *Bullitt* and *Dirty Harry* - but imagine the JUMPS! Man. It's be rad.



DRIVER: LONDON

EXPLAIN YOURSELF...

Well, *The Getaway* was cancelled - so why not? London is the new New York these anyway - or so we've been told.

THE STORY

YOU are a retired cop and ex-touring car racer who's dabbling in private security work in soggy noughties London when you're suddenly dragged back onto the force for one last job. Deep undercover you need to lay rubber all over town to get to the truth of whatever it is you're investigating. You guessed it.

HOW WILL IT PLAY?

It's *Driver*, so hopping out of the car and walking about should be thoroughly discouraged. Lots of fanging across town in Aston Martins and Vauxhalls. There should also be an absolute boatload of swearing.

PROBABILITY

Driver has ventured outside the US before, and it IS developed in the UK - but we probably wouldn't hold our breath.



DRIVER: SYDNEY

EXPLAIN YOURSELF...

An open-world game set in Sydney? What part of this would be BAD? People like Sydney. The world recognises the harbour, the bridge, the opera house - don't tell us it's too niche.

THE STORY

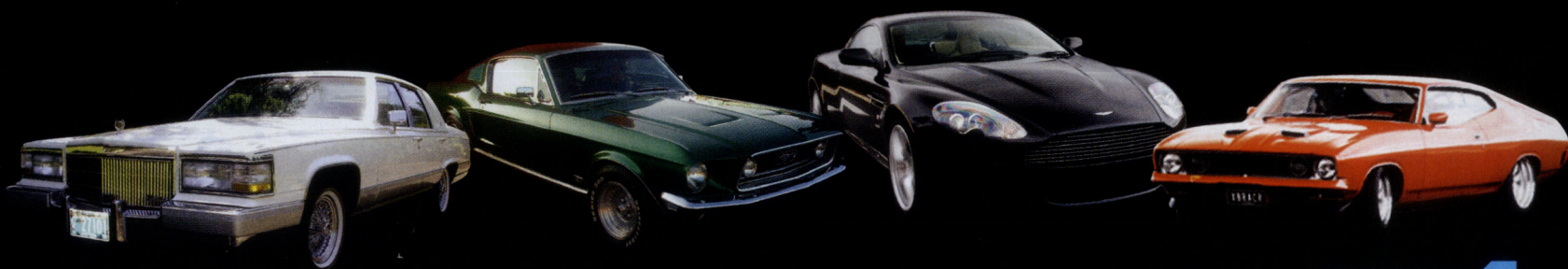
YOU are a retired cop and ex-touring car racer who's now running a small bar in the Cross in sunny '90s Sydney when you're suddenly dragged back onto the force for one last job. Deep undercover you need to lay rubber all over town to get to the truth of whatever it is you're investigating. Yep.

HOW WILL IT PLAY?

It's *Driver*, so hopping out of the car and walking about should be thoroughly discouraged. Lots of fanging across town in XB Falcons and Toranas. Also, all the characters should be named after guys from *Two Hands*. Pando, Acko, Wally, Kiwi Bob, Wozza, etc.

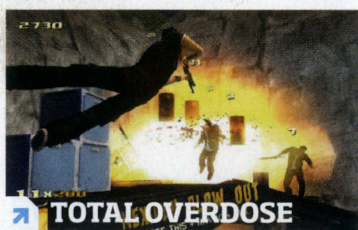
PROBABILITY

Um, zero?



TOP 10 TIME CONTROL DEVICES

Yes, *The Matrix* (the film) invented Bullet Time. But, like Band-Aid, Hoover and PlayStation it's entered the common lexicon. The mechanic of slowing down time is sometimes integrated seamlessly into gameplay, and other times it sticks out like a ten-foot pube.



Everything about this game was over the top. Tarantino could've coined the plot whilst cars, guns and bastardised Mexican culture abounded amongst the explosions. It wasn't polished, and it didn't matter, as long the momentum continued and combos rolled on. Going into slo-mo or rewind wasn't given a context apart from it was a cool thing to do and backed the madness up nicely.

RACE DRIVER: GRID

Instead of a replay being a static script of the action, Codemasters made it a literal interpretation; a chance to re-play the moment and correct the mistakes you made at a point of your choice. Playing with the slow-forward and -reverse controls was awesome at the point of impact and allowed for pixel-perfect timing when re-launching.



A real technical achievement at the time, and released as free-running games were just about to swell: the then-new Prince and his magic blade were fresh. The equation was simple: kill enemies, fill the timer and rewind at will. It didn't offer the finesse we expect today, but the game still holds up well and the inspiration it provided for the titles you're playing now was immense.



ENTER THE MATRIX

Yes, it was rushed to tie in with the *Revelations/Reloaded* story. Sure, most of the game was utter crapcakes. But, Shiny and Atari did deliver in spades on one aspect of what people wanted: bullet-time. The fighting was competent, and it tapped into the height of the *Matrix*'s hype; people wanted to be there, doing that, and it was undeniably gratifying landing vicious blows even if you weren't Neo.



MAX PAYNE

This is the game that started it all, really. The term 'Shootdodge' never really took off (probably for good reason) but the slow-motion John Woo-infused diving about, twin Berettas blazing was truly magnificent. There really is something disturbingly satisfying about peppering scumbags in the chest with a pair of hand cannons and watching the slow-motion bullet ballet as they jiggle and drop. They're baddies after all, and that's justice. Bring on *Max Payne 3*, seriously.



TONY HAWK PROJECT 8

One of the biggest innovations in the series was the 'Nail A Trick' mode. Click in both thumbsticks after launching yourself skyward and the camera swoops down to and focuses on the board. Time slows, making what would be only a second or two into five. A deft flick of each 'stick controls each foot, flipping the board around each axis. A creative idea, but *Skate* killed it.



RESISTANCE: FALL OF MAN

You're already under pressure with pissed-off Chimera forces bearing down and firing upon your locale. Take the pressure off with the shooter favourite: the sniper rifle. Looking through the scope – and the scope only – dramatically slows the action down; limiting the time bend antics to this one weapon makes it less of a cliché and more of a tactical option.

GTA: VICE CITY

Now, this came in *GTAIII* as well, but *Vice City* turned the adrenaline pills from being a gimmick to an integrated gameplay mechanic. Perhaps it was an ode to Pac Man (after all, a power pill did slow down the ghosts), or more likely it just slotted in nicely with the debauchery *GTA* espoused. Regardless, a pill pick-up not only gave Tommy super strength, more crucially it made the mayhem more manageable during chases and when using a sniper rifle.



VIEWTIFUL JOE

Literally sucked in to a movie to save his girlfriend Sylvia, nuggetty Joe is bestowed with filmic powers to aid his quest: Slow, Mach Speed and Zoom. Whilst Zoom was all about eye candy, Slow and Mach Speed manipulated the environment and enemies to your advantage. Need to get past a swinging axe? Slow down time and kick it out the way. Want to blitz through a cluster of bad guys? Mach Speed and swat them aside. Style almost wins over function.



TIMESHIFT

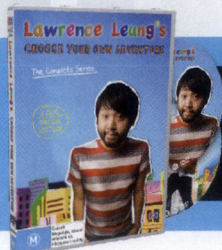
True, *TimeShift* left us a little cold but the time-suit was awesome. The wizardry in the suit gave you the ability to re-wind, pause and, of course, do slow-mo. Elemental puzzles and fire-fights relied on these abilities and whilst the 'best' option was recommended you could blatantly ignore it. The best bit was using it in a fire-fight and clocking the expression on a grunt after you swiped his piece and shot him with it.



FAVOURITES

LAWRENCE LEUNG

After performing stand-up comedy for several years and writing material for a group of blokes known as *The Chaser* for a few more, Lawrence Leung made a hit show called *Choose Your Own Adventure* that recently screened on the ABC. Once we convinced him to put the Rubik's cube down, Lawrence chatted to *OPS* and talked about his other favourite adventures: videogames. These are his top 10.



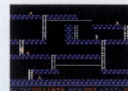
CHOOSE THIS ADVENTURE

Ever felt the uncontrollable urge to be a rock star but don't know how to follow through? Want to find out the secret to approaching your long-lost crush? Find out how Lawrence did it in *Choose Your Own Adventure*. The DVD is out now at ABC shops and other stores, or you can get it online at shop.abc.net.au. And until that DVD is in your hand, check out his platform game at abc.net.au/Lawrence.

LAWRENCE LEUNG'S TOP 10 VIDEOGAMES

**Donkey Kong, Game & Watch**

This one's a classic. I remember every kid in school had *Donkey Kong* and we would compete during lunchtimes. I bought one on eBay a few years ago but my barrel-jumping form is not as good as it once was.

**Lode Runner, Apple IIE**

This is a silly platformer where you're a stick figure that climbs ladders and digs holes whilst being chased by other, more sinister, stick figures. The best thing about this game was there was a level builder to create your own worlds. It was the *LittleBigPlanet* of the '80s.

**Golden Eye, Nintendo 64**

This revolutionary first person shooter was so good. In fact, it was better than the movie, which is pretty rare for a movie-to-videogame tie-in.

**Choplifter, Apple IIE**

One of the first games I ever played. You're a chopper pilot that must rescue hostage stick figures whilst avoiding fire from baddie stick figures. My favourite move was to kamikaze crash into enemy lines. Black Hawk Down!

**Double Dragon, Amstrad PC**

So many beat-em-ups are about fighting solo or against another player. But *DD* was the first game I played where my mate and I could be on the same team and clean up the streets together. It's also the first game I played where I had to hit women. Sure, they were lashing me with whips, but it was still awkward. Australia says no.

**California Games, Apple IIE**

Hacky sack hitting the seagull! Bonus points.

**Rampage, Amstrad PC**

A brilliant giant monster game where the only aim is to smash the shit out of skyscrapers. It should be prescribed as anger management therapy.

**Helmet, Game & Watch**

I took this sucker everywhere with me when I was little. The game was simply about trying to get from one side of the screen to the other as hammers, anvils and heavy objects rained from the sky. Made no sense, but was as addictive as Wizz Fizz.

**Pac Man, Atari 5200**

A kid up the street from me had the first computer I had ever seen: the Atari 5200. *Pac Man* was probably the first game I played inside a house. Before the Atari, we just had Galaga at the fish 'n chips shop.

**Leisure Suit Larry in the Land of the Lounge Lizards, Apple IIE**

My earliest notions of sex education came from this balding, pot-bellied lustful loser. That explains a lot.

AROUND THE WORLD IN PS3

OPS trawls high and low for what's going on around the globe in gaming

GLOUCESTERSHIRE, ENGLAND
SPECIAL EDITION OF GTA
Richard Thornhill bought two pre-owned *GTA* games from Gamestation, a retail store in the UK, and found four ecstasy tablets wrapped up inside one of the instruction manuals. "When I opened the box up, the cling film wrap fell out. I could not believe it," said Thornhill. "I dread to think what the consequences would have been if [my son] had found them. He is only 12. He could have died." Thornhill immediately took the tablets to the police. Gamestation apologised, and said "We have rigorous procedures for accepting pre-owned titles and checking them before they are put back on sale. We have launched an immediate investigation... to find out what happened in this instance."

ROCHESTER, NEW YORK
OPTICAL EXPLOSION
Psychologists, Attorneys-General and gamers can finally agree that looking down the barrel of a (virtual) piece improves your eyesight. Games such as *Killzone 2*, *Left 4 Dead* and *Call of Duty* increases what lab coats call your 'contrast sensitivity' by up to 43 percent, which is your ability to observe changes in shades of grey against a constant, flat-shaded background. It's critical for driving and reading, and generally degrades as we age. "[This] is not a skill that people were supposed to get better at by training," said Daphne Bavelier, lead researcher and professor at the University of Rochester in New York state.

LONDON, ENGLAND
CONSOLE-ER OF THE LONELY
A specialised PS3 website, PS3pricecompare.co.uk, polled 1,130 men who were in a relationship and found that an alarming 72 percent would prefer to play a new game than enjoy some after dark activity with their partner. This figure drops to 32 percent when the men were asked "Which would you prefer; sex with your partner or an evening playing video games?". When clarifying their decision, reasons included that their partners were "being hard to please" to "not being as much fun" as playing games.

BROOME, AUSTRALIA
BROOME RAIDER
Thailand? Cambodia? Egypt? Irrelevant. Lara's next adventure could be in Broome, WA, searching for the remains of Alexander the Great. Tim Tutungis, a Perth resident, was told the tale of Alexander's remains being in a cave in Broome, by a friend, Louis Batalis, who had read some ancient Greek inscriptions in the cave after the government had discovered them. Tutungis is almost convinced by his friend's story, even though Batalis has just about lost his memory. The theory is that after the war of the Macedonians in India, troops returning home went off course and landed in Broome. Historians generally agree that Alexander returned to Babylon, and died in 323BCE.

TEXAS, USA
SOME FIN WORK
While this testudines might never make it into a crime-fighting, pizza-eating quartet with its own videogame, we admire its tenacity. Allison, a five-year-old turtle, lost three of her fins and could only swim in circles. Employees at Sea Turtle Inc fitted Allison with a neoprene "ninja" suit that has a fin on the back to act as a rudder, so she can swim in a straight line. They had previously tried to implement a prosthetic rear flipper, which didn't work.

INTERNATIONAL CHARTS

UK
Source: ELSPA

1	The Godfather II	EA
2	Resident Evil 5	Capcom
3	Killzone 2	Sony
4	Street Fighter IV	Capcom
5	FIFA 09	EA
6	Wheelman	Ubisoft
7	LittleBigPlanet	Sony
8	Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare	Activision
9	SEGA Mega Drive Collection	Sega
10	Tom Clancy's HAWX	Ubisoft

JAPAN
Source: VGChartz

1	Musou Orochi Z	Koei
2	Biohazard 5	Capcom
3	Ryu Ga Gotoku 3	Sega
4	Senjo no Valkyria Gallian Chronicles	Sega
5	Winning Post World	Koei
6	Demon's Soul	Sony
7	World Soccer Winning Eleven 2009	Konami
8	Gundam Musou 2	Namco Bandai
9	Gran Turismo 5 Prologue	Sony
10	Street Fighter IV	Capcom

USA
Source: NPD

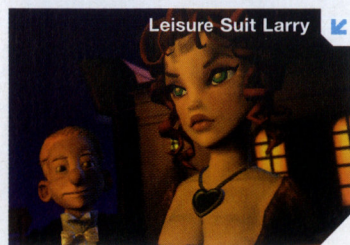
1	The Godfather II	EA
2	Resident Evil 5	Capcom
3	MLB 09: The Show	Sony
4	Guitar Hero Metallica	Activision
5	The Chronicles of Riddick: AODA	Atari
6	Killzone 2	Sony
7	Call of Duty: World at War	Activision
8	Guitar Hero: World Tour	Activision
9	Street Fighter IV	Capcom
10	Guitar Hero III: Legends of Rock	Activision

RELEASE SCHEDULE

Coming soon to a store near you...

APRIL 2009

- PS3**
The Chronicles of Riddick: AODA
GENRE: SHOOTER | DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI
- PS3**
Afro Samurai
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI
- PS3**
The Godfather II
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: EA
- PS3**
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam 2
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: THQ
- PS3**
X-Men Origins: Wolverine
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION
- PS3**
Leisure Suit Larry: BOB
GENRE: ADVENTURE | DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI
- PS3**
SingStar Pop Edition
GENRE: MUSIC | DISTRIBUTOR: SONY



JUNE 2009

- PS3**
Fight Night Round 4
GENRE: SPORTS | DISTRIBUTOR: EA
- PS3**
Batman: Arkham Asylum
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI
- PS3**
Infamous
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: SONY
- PS3**
Ashes Cricket 2009
GENRE: SPORTS | DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI
- PS3**
SuperCar Challenge
GENRE: RACING | DISTRIBUTOR: TBC
- PS3**
Red Faction Guerrilla
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: THQ
- PS3**
Guitar Hero Smash Hits
GENRE: MUSIC | DISTRIBUTOR: ACTI
- PS3**
Ghostbusters
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI
- PS3**
Prototype
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION

LATE/TBC 2009

- PS3**
Battlefield: Bad Company 2
GENRE: SHOOTER | DISTRIBUTOR: EA
- PS3**
Bayonetta
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: SEGA

- PS3**
BioShock 2
GENRE: SHOOTER | DISTRIBUTOR: 2K
- PS3**
Colin McRae DiRT 2
GENRE: RACING | DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI
- PS3**
Darksiders: Wrath of War
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: THQ
- PS3**
I Am Alive
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT
- PS3**
Final Fantasy XIII
GENRE: RPG | DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT
- PS3**
God of War III
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: SONY
- PS3**
Gran Turismo 5
GENRE: RACING | DISTRIBUTOR: SONY
- PS3**
Heavy Rain
GENRE: ADVENTURE | DISTRIBUTOR: SONY
- PS3**
IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds of Prey
GENRE: FLIGHT | DISTRIBUTOR: TBC
- PS3**
Just Cause 2
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI
- PS3**
Mafia II
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: 2K
- PS3**
MAG
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: SONY
- PS3**
Red Dead Redemption
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: ROCKSTAR
- PS3**
Modern Warfare 2
GENRE: SHOOTER | DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION
- PS3**
Singularity
GENRE: SHOOTER | DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION
- PS3**
Tekken 6
GENRE: FIGHTING | DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI
- PS3**
Uncharted 2: Among Thieves
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: SONY

MAY 2009

- PS3**
Bionic Commando
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: THQ
- PS3**
Virtua Tennis 2009
GENRE: SPORTS | DISTRIBUTOR: SEGA
- PS3**
Guitar Hero Metallica
GENRE: MUSIC | DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION
- PS3**
UFC 2009: Undisputed
GENRE: SPORTS | DISTRIBUTOR: THQ
- PS3**
Terminator Salvation
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: WB
- PS3**
Damnation
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI
- PS3**
FUEL
GENRE: RACING | DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI
- PS3**
Sacred 2: Fallen Angel
GENRE: RPG | DISTRIBUTOR: FUNTASTIC

QUOTE UNQUOTE

Industry chatter, inside tips and loose lips



"Piracy is the single greatest threat to the development and release of [videogames]... It's a job killer in an economy that needs millions more jobs, not less." **ESA CEO Michael D. Gallagher** on videogame piracy



"This is something you know nothing about... I played *Fallout 3* so often that I had to go to a hand doctor. I did, I had to get injections in my hands." **Matthew Perry** on *The View*, a TV henhouse for loud chicks



"Seventy-five percent of American 'gamers' – people who play video games – are older than 18 and nevertheless are allowed to vote." **Washington Post columnist and Pulitzer winner George F. Will**



"I'm not sure when this will happen, but yes, I'm very interested," **Metal Gear Solid 4** guru Hideo Kojima on the possibility of working with a Western developer as a producer sometime in the future

AUSTRALIAN CHARTS

Source: GfK



1 The Godfather II



2 Killzone 2



3 Call of Duty 4: MW



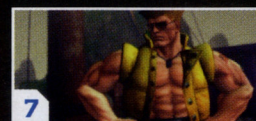
4 Resident Evil 5



5 FIFA 09



6 Grand Theft Auto IV



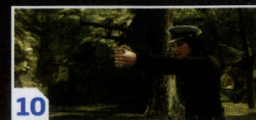
7 Street Fighter IV



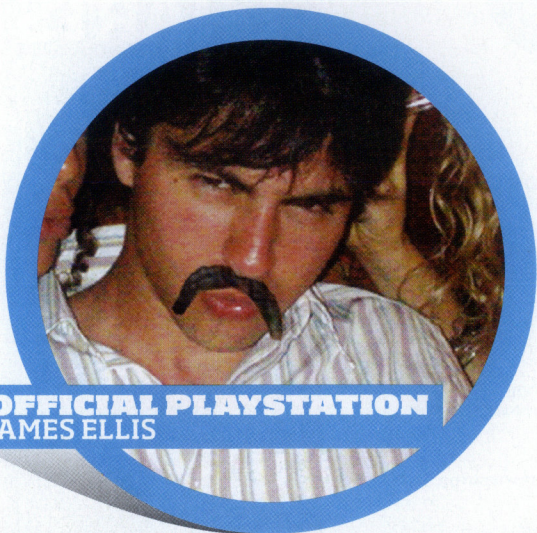
8 Legends of Wrestlemania



9 Guitar Hero: World Tour



10 Metal Gear Solid 4



OFFICIAL PLAYSTATION
JAMES ELLIS

WHERE IS MY MIND?

Humanity's crazy-eyed march to make all things awesome continues. Only recently a plastic surgeon in Europe worked out how to use stem cell technology to turn the world's bald chested women into an army of meloned warriors – without silicon! It's entirely possible that in 10 years or so we'll all look like a litter of Calvin Klein clones.

Yet image isn't the only thing science is trying to master. Advertising companies, massive multinationals, and television networks are also looking to an emerging scientific field for a fool-proof model for success.

The technique is called steady-state topography (SST). It has nothing to do with Tom Cruise flying aircraft over Afghanistan playing *Where's Osama*, but is focused on how that chunky bit of grey matter upstairs buzzes and hums at the sight of another limp McDonald's ad or the latest cop show on the glass tit. Categorised under the hip umbrella of neuromarketing, it's the newest weapon in the war to ensnare the minds of the masses.

Using various monitoring apparatuses it shows researchers what sort of cranial activity is going on while a participant gorges on media. For instance, it might demonstrate that guys dig a new animal dating show more than girls. Providers are then free to tweak and fart about until their offering hits their demographic, or else keep the media the same and recalibrate the promotional strategy. It's win, win.

If it's not already on the bandwagon, the videogame industry will be. Speaking as we did with *BioShock 2* Creative Director, Jordan Thomas, last issue,

he spoke of the lengths and depths ploughed and plumaged by publishers while testing a game with the masses. Currently all sorts of inane data is collected. From how long the average person spends in one room, to how tough it is to spot pathways and exits – everything is collected, fawned over, dissected.

SST offers more. It can answer why.

Rather than having to make assumptions about why Harry, an 18-year old casual gamer from Florida, spent three minutes and sixty-five seconds in the backyard patio area of a *Rainbow Six* level, developers should get data that's more useful. His brain activity might show he was scared out of his balls and didn't want to venture into the bloody butcher house down the hall due to some shrieking gunfire. Or perhaps he was bored out of his mind and invested in a quick microsleep.

Given the competition in the market, such a technique would be worth millions. The only thing left to see is if and when it'll be applied and whether the results will provide developers with enough feedback to turn middle-ground fodder into top-of-the-table juggernauts.

Hopefully it'll come good; a never-ending golden age of entertainment would be far more copacetic than an increase in the average bra size. (Maybe.)

James Ellis is looking for a way to read your mind, and then turn it into a novel.

“It's the newest weapon in the war to ensnare the minds of the masses”



TRUTH IS WRITTEN IN BLOOD



ASSASSIN'S CREED II

DISCOVER THE NEW ASSASSIN WITH AUGMENTED REALITY!

WITH THE USE OF A SIMPLE WEBCAM YOU CAN VIEW THE NEW HERO OF ASSASSIN'S CREED IN 3D ON THIS PAGE IN LESS THAN 30 SECONDS.

FOLLOW THE BELOW STEPS:

1. VISIT THE WEBSITE WWW.ASSASSINSCREED.COM
2. AT THE END OF THE INTRODUCTION VIDEO, CLICK ON THE RED ICON IN THE LEFT CORNER.
3. HOLD THE SYMBOL ON THE RIGHT IN FRONT OF YOUR WEBCAM.
4. IN A FEW SECONDS THE CHARACTER WILL APPEAR IN 3D ON YOUR SCREEN!



UBISOFT

FEELING DIRTY

OFFICIAL PLAYSTATION
ANGRY SACKBOY

Colin McRae *DiRT2*. Unfortunately it sounds like it'll be even more of a departure from the origins of the series than the last one.

Will it be decent? Probably. Will it divide *Colin McRae* fans? Definitely.

Allow us to dissect this spiel from the official website (the text-only version; we couldn't spot it on the site as displayed normally).

"*DiRT2* is the antithesis of the boring World Rally Championship annual tour."

The 'boring' World Rally Championship annual tour? The World Rally Championship is the highest profile four-wheeled motorsport championship in the world after Formula One. Boring? According to whom? You know you'll be speaking to a lot of rally fans here, right? You do know Colin McRae was a champion of this 'boring' sport, right? "Hey, all you Colin McRae and rally fans – the WRC is crap and we can't understand why you like it. Buy our game." Last year more than 816 million people in 180 countries watched the WRC, with around 51 million viewers per round. Surprisingly popular for such a boring sport.

"It's an off-road racing world tour that takes players to extreme locations including Morocco, Malaysia, China and the Baja desert."

You're going to see the word extreme a lot here. We just still can't believe you got away with shipping the first *DiRT* without Sweden or Finland.

"The game features authentic licensed off-road racing vehicles that

the player can customise to take part in a range of different racing event types including both point-to-point, single car rally and multi-car race events."

Yeah, yeah, yeah, it all SOUNDS impressive – but can we just turn it on and race a conventional rally without all the peripheral nu metal and energy drink advertising? You know, like in the old *Colin McRae* rally games? Are we going to be forced into this festival bullshit?

"DiRT2 reflects the modern direction of rally as an extreme/action sport by licensing leading racing talent and leveraging the credibility of featured lifestyle brand partners with the aim of increasing the reach and relevance of the *DiRT* franchise."

The credibility of featured lifestyle brand partners? Wank. It was all this 'leveraging' that led to the death of true rock and roll in the late 1970s. Jumping some cars at the X-Games is a neat spectacle, but it hasn't changed the fundamentals of 'regular' rallying as a motorsport. Twenty20 cricket is great to watch, but who's claiming it reflects the modern direction of international cricket? 'Extreme' rallying isn't going to replace the WRC anymore than Twenty20 will replace Test Cricket.

"The *DiRT* brand, at it's (sic.) core, is a rebellious statement against the modern racing franchises that showcase pristine car models in clean, photo-real environments. *DiRT* takes the themes of rally and off-road racing and applies extreme sports attitude and lifestyle-relevance."

Good grief. Don't the terms 'rebellious statement' and 'lifestyle relevance' cancel each other out? A modern racing franchise with pristine car models in clean, photo-real environments, huh?

That'd be *Gran Turismo*, we guessing. The critically acclaimed, 50-million+ selling, fan-favourite *Gran Turismo*. Got it.

"*DiRT2* is the only game that combines authentically modelled off-road/rally vehicles and environments with the tone of an extreme sports event."

Except *MotorStorm*.

"Off-Road Racing with Extreme-Sports Attitude."

Sigh. Codemasters, you can do whatever you want to make money. The key points, however, are:

1: We know the new *DiRT* and *GRID* series are designed to sell well in the US.

We're not stupid. Seriously.

"We've geared our product line to the States, and so we're starting to work closely with US developers," says Rod Cousens, Codemasters CEO

Problem is, you want your cake and you want to eat it too. You've gone and made some decent, albeit arcade-style, racing games that have a chance to sell the US. Fine. You've called them *DiRT* and *GRID*. Clever. Problem is, *Race Driver* and *Colin McRae* are good brands long-associated with top-selling games in

Europe. The solution? Tack those brands on these new games *outside* of the US. Who cares if they really don't anything in common?

2: Is it really a tribute to Colin McRae when you remove his name to make more coin?

From the initial press release:
The announcement marks confirmation that the game will be headlined by Colin McRae, honouring the life of the rally legend.

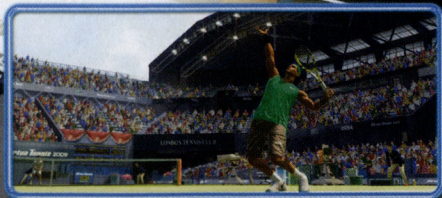
"Colin McRae was all about the speed, the excitement and the entertainment of rally driving. Even when we first worked with him over ten years ago, he captured a freedom and a spirit that enthralled rally fans," said Gavin Raeburn, senior executive producer at Codemasters Studios.

And yet, head to the US teaser site for *Colin McRae DiRT2* and all traces of his name have been erased from the logo. All you'll find is a video of American Ken Block (so-so rally driver and... DC Shoes co-founder) speaking briefly about how Colin inspired him, before having a two models bring him a drink and shower him in champagne. Extreme!

Angry Sackboy is an ex-videogames journalist who likes WRC and misses rally games.

“Don't the terms 'rebellious statement' and 'lifestyle relevance' cancel each other out?”

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OFFICIAL PLAYSTATION
PAUL TAYLOR

ONLIVE TO FLATLINE

“But how can a system that appropriates two failed ideas even pretend to work?”

Way back in 1991, EA founder Trip Hawkins formed The 3DO Company, to be both a console and game developer, and the 3DO console came out in 1993. Hawkins' vision was well before his time. He wanted to shake up the console market with a device that not only played games on CD-ROM, but would also play music, video and be a set-top box – similar to something you have under your telly today, right? – but the 3DO was doomed. It was prohibitively expensive, lacked killer

titles, and then Sony launched the original PlayStation in 1995 with more support. Around the same time that

Hawkins founded The 3DO Company, industry pundits were salivating over the prospect of players being able to 'stream' games into their homes via their consoles. Their logic was that TV signals could be broadcast over the air, so why not games? People would be able to play whatever they wanted for a small fee at any time they felt like. It sounded exciting but it obviously never happened.

Fast-forward to March, 2009, and the Game Developers Conference in

San Francisco. Steve Perlman and Mike McGarvey announced a service and device called OnLive, and, from their description, it takes elements of the 3DO and broadcast system, with the potential to completely eradicate the need for a games console or high-end PC. But how can a system that appropriates two failed ideas even pretend to work? The idea is that by employing a plug-in in a low-end PC (your netbook, even) or a dedicated OnLive MicroConsole – that looks a bit like a portable hard-drive with two USB sockets for controllers – you connect to the net and choose the game you want to play from the OnLive catalogue. Once you've chosen the game, the vast calculations needed to toss around pixels is handled by OnLive's servers and is piped back down the net to your PC or TV screen.

Like the 3DO and the idea spouted by the pundits in '91, I just can't see this working. The minimum connection speed for standard definition, 480p (that's what your old CRT TV used to do – and the Wii currently does), is 1.5Mbps. For HD, it's 5Mbps. As of the end of the June quarter 2008, the Australian Bureau of Statistics reported that there were 7.23 million subscribers to the internet. 43

percent of all subscribers, 3.1 million, had a download speed of 1.5Mbps or greater – and that includes businesses. It's a fair bet that the 4.13 million households with a connection speed of less than 1.5Mbps own a games console and would be taking a step back in terms of graphical grunt.

Gaming collections won't exist, as the OnLive service will be subscription based: so while you pay a monthly fee to play whatever you want, you don't actually own anything whilst chewing through your monthly download quota. You always have to be connected to the internet to play, and if someone else in your household wants to share the bandwidth, games are going to crawl. Forget about borrowing from mates as well – no discs means there's nothing to borrow.

OnLive just spells bad news, especially here in Australia where the broadband infrastructure required just doesn't exist – the Rudd government's proposed broadband scheme is years away from reaching its full potential. Perhaps OnLive is a decade before its time.

Paul Taylor is best enjoyed with a hot cup of coffee, milk and sugar.

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Speak to us!

LETTER OF THE MONTH!

SUBSTANCE OVER STYLE

Hi there, long-time reader, first-time writer-in-guy. I just wanted to say something about the level of importance of story lines for games. I understand that, with so many games that need to grab the attention of the consumer, game developers obviously need to set their game apart by creating a story line that will draw the player into a world that will make them more emotionally invested in games.

However, in order to differentiate themselves and give gamers a unique experience, it seems like developers forego the more important features of making a good game. These games have sacrificed quality of gameplay for attempts to make their game stand out, but instead, have made their games into another carbon copy.

Recent examples include *Haze*, *Kane & Lynch: Dead Men* and, to a lesser extent, *Assassin's Creed*. Let's think about it: a first-person shooter from the developers behind the *Timesplitters* series? In the bag. A squad-based, action-based game from the minds of *Hitman* and *Freedom Fighters*? Should be an instant hit. Yet both games seemed to care more about turning their games into Hollywood wannabes than creating intense-filled action games.

As for *Assassin's Creed*, the game was a first for free-roaming and adaptive gameplay, but the science fiction stuff just seemed a bit unnecessary and the story of Altair alone would have been sufficient, with more focus on making a wider variety of missions. However, we have seen games succeed tremendously when



it comes to story and gameplay. *MGS4*, *GTAIV*, *BioShock* and *God of War* are games that have struck that delicate balance between these competing game aspects. Even games like *Killzone 2* and *Resistance 2* may not be as strong in the story department, but the developers knew where their loyalties lie and created outstanding core gameplay, and sales figures have, thankfully, agreed with these developers. I just hope that game designers understand that gamers need more than just the destination – they need the journey as well.

RJ Bell, via email

You've made some good points here, and it is true that many games strike a decent balance between story and gameplay (although even we would admit that 25 minute cut scenes in MGS4 are a little much). It's up to developers to ensure gameplay isn't sacrificed for story purposes.



LETTER OF THE MONTH WINS... RED FACTION: GUERRILLA

The letter of the month this issue will receive a copy of *Red Faction: Guerrilla* for their troubles – enjoy!

ROCK SHOCK



Hey guys,
Firstly I'd like to say that you are doing a great job with the mag, but I'm really writing in about my disappointment in Activision's cheap *Guitar Hero World Tour* peripherals, mainly the drums. I purchased *Guitar Hero World Tour* a few months ago, full band kit mind you, and immediately set up my drum set, it was working great! I was relieved considering that some people were having troubles with their drum kit. At first nothing was wrong. My mates and I were having a blast, but then within a few weeks of some serious rocking out, the yellow cymbal failed altogether. I was livid. I claimed my warranty and got a replacement cymbal from Activision, so, at first, I wasn't too annoyed. Once again, after a few plays though, the cymbal failed, I was miserable. The stores wouldn't take it back and I'm out of warranty, therefore I'm basically left with a drum kit minus the yellow cymbal which is pivotal in the game. Furthermore, I can't play *Guitar Hero Metallica*, which I've been waiting months for, and I can't get the boys together for a round of *Guitar Hero* anymore as the drum kit was the key to having fun. I've seriously lost my confidence in Activision and do not know what to do next as I cannot play *Guitar Hero* anymore as I really only bought it for the drums.

A very disappointed *Guitar Hero* fan,
Adrian, via email

This is a rough situation. We'd say the stores aren't part of the 'warranty program', so that's why they 'can't' take it back. Is the warranty on your drums really up? This is a website with GH fixes that could help: <http://www.powertuneplus.com/gh/>. You probably won't want to hear this, but Luke says you ought to have bought Rock Band.

SPEAK TO US

Love the mag? Hate the mag? We want your opinions and questions on *OPS*, on games – on anything that you feel the need to share with your fellow readers. The best letter of each issue wins the Game of the Month! Write to us on paper or on a computer at:

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Speak to us!

WHO'S THE BOSS?

Dear OPS,

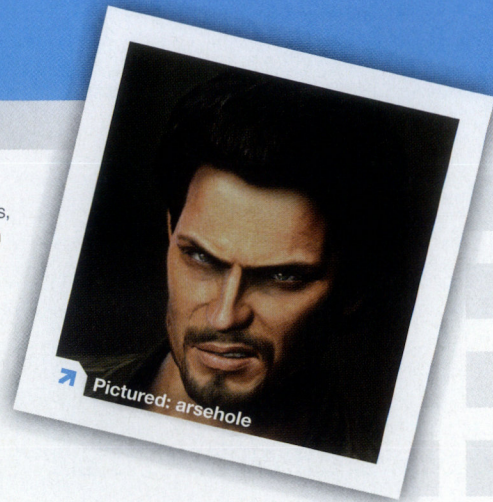
Let me just start by saying I love the mag. I've only started reading monthly editions since I got a 12-month subscription for Christmas, but I'm loving it, and it's helped me make some informed decisions regarding games. Now, to the point:

I've been gaming since I was four (I'm turning 14 this year) and in my time I've played through a lot of boss fights. Ever since the days of PS2, I've been noticing a steady decline in the quality of final boss fights at the end of games. Most games are phenomenal, but they just seem to throw it away in the final fight. Ever since I fought The Boss at the end of MGS3, which I regard as a perfect, no-holds-barred boss fight, I've noticed the fights have become more and more restrictive, even generic. For example, I've only got about half a dozen games for PS3, all of which I've finished and played the boss fights. *Star Wars: The Force Unleashed* had some great gameplay, but the final light side battle was pretty generic. Then *Uncharted: Drake's Fortune*

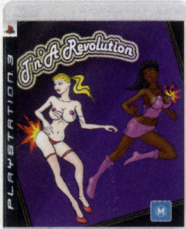
didn't even have you fighting the final boss, you fought some soldiers and killed him in quicktime events. *Fallout 3's* final boss I killed in one hit in V.A.T.S.! This is a really bad thing to me, because in my eyes the final boss fights are supposed to be a climax of everything you've learnt throughout the game to beat a single, powerful enemy, not several dozen, an invincible enemy, or a weak enemy. It's already spoilt several games for me. Do you guys feel the same?

Joshua Cox, via email

Kinda. We'd certainly like more epic finales – but we thought the final fight in Uncharted was quite well paced. And it had a rad one-liner – "Adios asshole". The guy was SPANISH! It's clever, come on! Sigh.



IT SHOULD BE A GAME!



T AND A REVOLUTION

By Jasmin Chappell

How many hours have you spent playing... well, most any game with a female protagonist and forgiven the impractical attire and contrived acrobatic poses because they meant you got to spend the majority of your playtime watching the hypnotic sway of a scantily clad derrier? Hell, even Old Snake had that wiggle happening. Have you ever thrown aside thoughts of boring 'real' physics, because breasts that jiggle in the slightest breeze are more fun? Then this game is for you! Playing as a variety of bootylicious babes, you can take all of those excellent cliches and put them into heart-pounding action, with breasts that can suffocate or club a man to death, a rear that could knock a man down, and bras that could put a fella's eye out. You can at least see why the baddie keeps coming back after you beat him up five times. That, and he's trying to make everyone wear jumpsuits or something. Who cares about the story? It has boobs.

The legendary feature, 'It Should Be a Game', is back by popular demand! Naturally, since we just brought it back an' all, we haven't received that many entries as of yet. That's where you come in. Send us all your game ideas, funny, serious, insane or otherwise to ops@derwenthoward.com.au. If you happen to have any 'mad Photoshop skillz' then flex those muscles and send us some pics to go with it. It'll make your entry all the more sweet. Get cracking people!

THE PlayStation CROSSWORD!

TEST YOUR BRAIN TO WIN A GAME!

How to enter: Use the letters from the coloured squares and re-arrange them to form the name of a videogame character. Send your answers to OPS@derwenthoward.com.au with OPS Crossword as the subject. Entries close June 24.

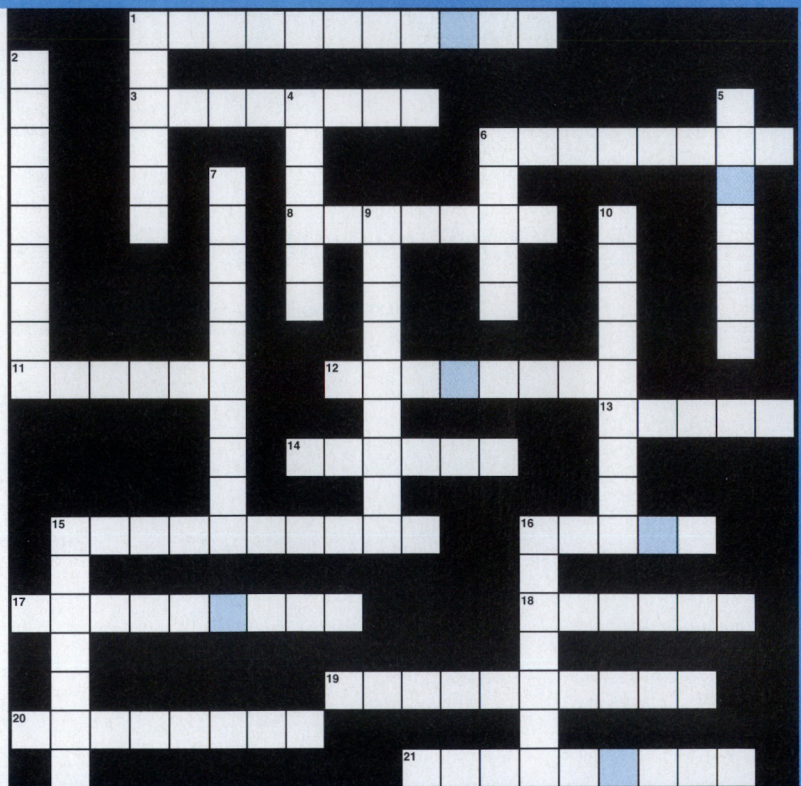
ACROSS

1. The voice of Solid Snake (5, 6)
3. This Ubisoft made *Prince of Persia* (7)
6. Peter Molyneux left this company to form Lionhead Studios (8)
8. *LittleBigPlanet's* end boss, The _____ (7)
11. Viewtiful Joe's girlfriend (6)
12. Father of PlayStation, Ken _____ (8)
13. Afro Samurai's alter ego, Ninja _____ (5)
14. Cloud Strife battles this megacorporation (6)
15. A vampire hack 'n slash on PS2 (10)
16. Parappa's heart belongs to Sunny _____ (5)

17. Harmorix's first music game on PlayStation 2 (9)
18. The mad computer who sang 'Still Alive' (6)
19. The Lakeside Amusement Park was in this spooky neighbourhood (6,4)
20. Ubisoft's upcoming disaster survival game (1, 2, 5)
21. SEGA's latest RPG (9)

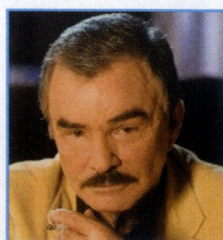
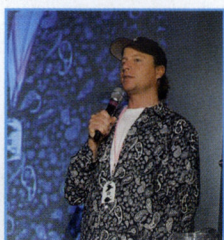
DOWN

1. Complete the title: *Katamari* _____ (6)
2. The original name of *Wipeout* developer, Studio Liverpool (9)
4. The 'R' in S.T.A.R.S. (6)
5. The voice of Buzz, Jason (7)
6. Fiddy spilt some _____ on the sand (5)
7. This bloke recently told you to eat lead (4, 6)
9. The 'E' in PES (9)
10. Early launch title of the PSX, *Battle Arena* _____ (9)
15. Tony Hawk's nickname (7)
16. Sarah Bryant and Pai Chan star in this *Virtua* brawler (7)



26: EDWARD CARNEY Down 2: ALTAIR 3: PROWER 5: CONQUER 6: HAPPINESS 7: HARMONIX 8: ISHIMURA 11: IMPACT 12: VALKYRIA 14: MORELLO 15: SOLVALOU 17: CRYPTO 19: BETHESDA 22: KASUGANO 24: CLYDE 25: JACKBLACK
Across 1: MAYPINE 4: BRUCIE 7: HARMONIX 9: HAPPINESS 10: RAPTURE 13: AFRICA 16: TEKKEEN 18: HADOUKEN 19: BRISBANE 20: RACCOON 21: WIFEOUT 23: DEATH
Last month's answers

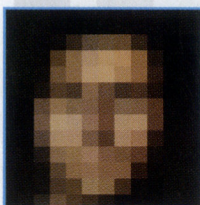
1. WHAT DO THESE PEOPLE HAVE IN COMMON:



2. WHICH OF THESE TRACKS DID NOT APPEAR IN THE FIRST GRAN TURISMO: a) High Speed Ring b) Midfield Raceway c) Grand Valley Speedway

3. WHO AM I?

Using the coordinates inscribed on a piece of my jewelry I set off on an adventure with my mate Sully and a journalist, Elena. I'm also a descendant of a famous explorer.



4. WHICH TEKKEN FIGHTER HAS A SPECIAL MOVE WHERE HE CAN KILL HIMSELF?

5. WHAT WEAPON DOES SOLID SNAKE FINISH OFF METAL GEAR WITH IN THE PSONE CLASSIC?

6. NARIKO AND KAI STAR IN WHICH GAME?

THE OPS QUIZ THING

Our imaginatively titled quiz will sort out the wheat from the chaff. Prove your worth with these brainbusters!

CUTTINGS

LEFT COLD

You can imagine my excitement when I heard Sony announcing the release of *Motorstorm Arctic Edge*. Here's the kicker, for PS2 and PSP. Great. I can understand why it's on the PSP, but why the hell is it on the PS2? They are moving backwards! **Alex Ostle, via email**

It probably has something to do with the fact there are more than 140 million PS2s around. What we want to know is if *Evolution* could make another WRC game? We need a decent rally game now that the USA has ruined the Colin McRae series.

NO PICTURES!

There are Trophies in *Burnout* that require a USB camera to get it. I am not buying a USB camera just to get the two Trophies for that game. Therefore the platinum trophy is out of reach. ARGH! **Tim Lieschke, via email**

That does suck. We can't really think of a way around it. You can't borrow one?

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MARVEL 20th Anniversary

7. IDENTIFY THE GAMES FROM THE SCREENSHOTS:



Answers: 1. They all voiced characters in G7A: Vice City 2. Midfield Raceway 3. Nathan Drake 4. Yoshimitsu 5. Stinger missile 6. Heavenly Sword 7. a) Mashed b) Crash Bandicoot 3: Warped c) Far Cry 2 d) Pursuit Force: Extreme Justice e) Prince Of Persia: Warrior Within f) Richard Burns Rally

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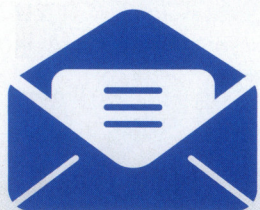


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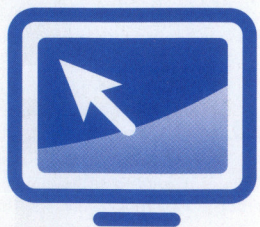
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FALLING STARS

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PS3 GENRE: ACTION | RELEASE: MAY 2009 | DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI | DEVELOPER: TERMINAL REALITY

GHOSTBUSTERS

Maybe now you'll never slime a guy with a positron collider, huh?

IT'S LIKE...

Fly-fishing



Ghostbusting

Do you believe in UFOs, astral projections, mental telepathy, ESP, clairvoyance, spirit-photography, telekinetic movement, full trance mediums, the Loch Ness monster and the theory of Atlantis? If the answer to the above is a banging *hell* yes, then buckle up baby as we take you back to a simpler time. When life was all about Murray, Bill Murray. *Caddyshack* and *Stripes* may have put him on the map, but who out there didn't lose their shit over *Ghostbusters* when it first came out?

Three comedic juggernauts pooled their combined talent to forge one of the most loved films of all time. Then, they made a sequel... enough about that... moving forward. The question on most fans lips has always been where's the third damn flick, aye? Each time some speed bump on the road would derail the

project, and as the years dragged on it seemed Father Time himself was doing his darnedest to make sure it never got off the ground. The x-factor was a new genre to explore and the pure moxy of Dan Akroyd who's involvement and never say die attitude has now made mere dreams a reality. Charge up the proton energy packs and flick the siren on Ecto 1 cause we got one!

LISTEN... DO YOU SMELL SOMETHING?

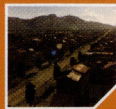
It was with more than a bit of nervous anticipation that we sat down to get a squiz at the new build of *Ghostbusters*, but from the moment the menu screen's audio kicked in with the familiar score, it soothed us like a lullaby and allayed our fears. Your safe house is the Ghostbusters base of operations; with so many familiar sights

it's a hardcore fan's delight. With the fireman's poles, Ecto 1, the wooden lockers, a charming picture of Vigo adorning the lobby, and the all powerful containment unit in the basement, you really feel like you're there – and it's the perfect place to start proceedings.

As the imaginatively named "Rookie" (as adorns your spiffy overalls), it's your job you help the boys pick up the slack roughly two years after the events of *GB2* and, more importantly, be a guinea pig for any untested bit of ghostbusting equipment Egon has managed to whip up. Your first assignment is to get a hold of Slimer. That cheeky wee bugger has gotten out of containment again, and made his way back to a familiar haunt. Yep, you guessed it, the same damn ballroom in the same damned hotel – and it's up to you to capture him.



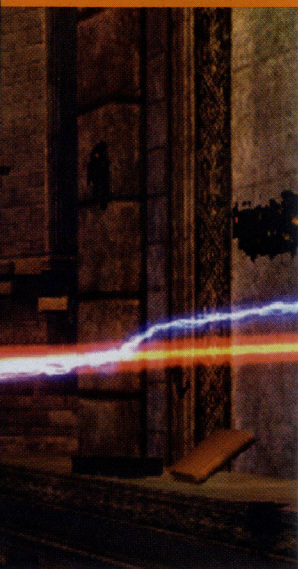
36 BATMAN: ARKHAM ASYLUM
The Caped Crusader vs. the scum of Gotham!



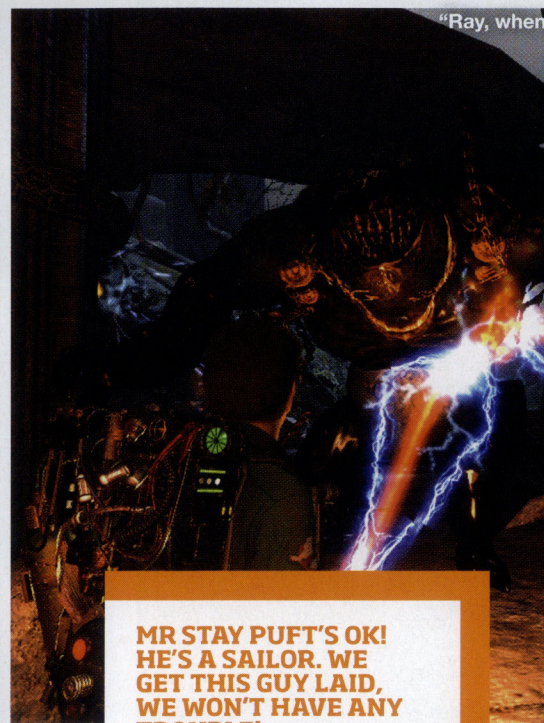
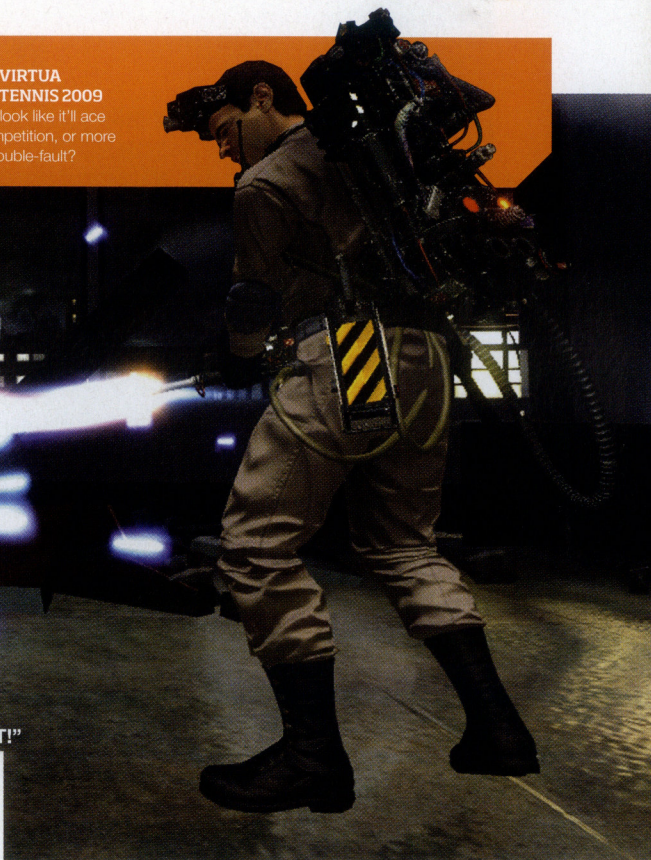
40 R.U.S.E.
Deceive and crush your enemies with this bold new RTS from Ubisoft.



41 VIRTUA TENNIS 2009
Does it look like it'll ace the competition, or more like a double-fault?



➤ "Let's show this prehistoric bitch how we do things downtown. THROW IT!"



"Ray, when someone asks you if you're a god, you say YES!" ➤



➤ "Mother pus bucket!"

MR STAY PUFT'S OK! HE'S A SAILOR. WE GET THIS GUY LAID, WE WON'T HAVE ANY TROUBLE!

As our play session drew to a close, we had a quick peek at a section involving the one, the only, Mr. Stay Puft Marshmallow Man! This guy is freakin' huge! We didn't get to face him directly, just various dog-like demons and ghosts pitching fireballs at us, whilst he cleared a path through New York's usually bustling streets. The otherworldly adversaries you face are a conglomerate of revisited film villains, and a whole new batch of big bad. We think they may have got the balance juuuuust right.



EVERYTHING WAS FINE WITH OUR SYSTEM UNTIL THE POWER GRID WAS SHUT OFF BY DICKLESS HERE.

All your favourite toys, gadgets and gizmos come to life here. You pick up his trail of ectoplasmic residue using your PKE Meter, which looks, sounds and responds just as you'd expect. Once you track down the dirty little scamp it's time to bust him right up. The first time you let fly with the proton pack, some may shed tears of joy. It's as wild and woolly as you remember, with exceptional detail going into the scorch marks and tiny flames it leaves in its wake. Consider any spectre a bucking bronco at a rodeo. You'll use your stream (and yes, you can cross them without destroying the universe – weird) to take the fight out of Slimer and wear him down. You'll need to pay attention that your pack doesn't



➤ "Back off, man. I'm a scientist"

overheat, and vent the system regularly for optimum use. Once you've broken him in, its time to launch a containment beam, and here's where it gets interesting.

Once a ghost's movement is restricted, panic sets in, as they frantically try to escape. You have to drag them in the opposite direction they're pissbolting to. On screen it looks like a deep-sea fisherman trying to wrestle a marlin. Then simply toss down a trap, pop it open and keep angling them towards its base as they make a last ditch effort to evade capture, and before you know it, whooshka! The trap sucks them up, blinking light and all.

BOY, THE SUPERINTENDENT'S GONNA BE PISSED!

If you look closely through the chaos, you may notice a fluctuating dollar sign in the top right corner. That is your 'smashed

stuff' balance. You get coin for each ghost you relocate (there are many more than you'd expect, not just boss battles), and there's a running tally, which increases each time you nail one or decreases when you, say, smash the living crap out of a ball room. Anything breakable comes up red on your reticle, so think before you let fly. Also the more \$\$\$ you collect, the more upgrades you can purchase – like less jittery beams and other funky new add-ons we're not going to spoil for you.

Each ghost you trap and zinger you hear, is like reclaiming a piece of your childhood (for those of us a little older now), and you won't be able to stop yourself from grinning as you play through it. We sure as hell couldn't. ➤ **Dave Kozicki**

WE SAY

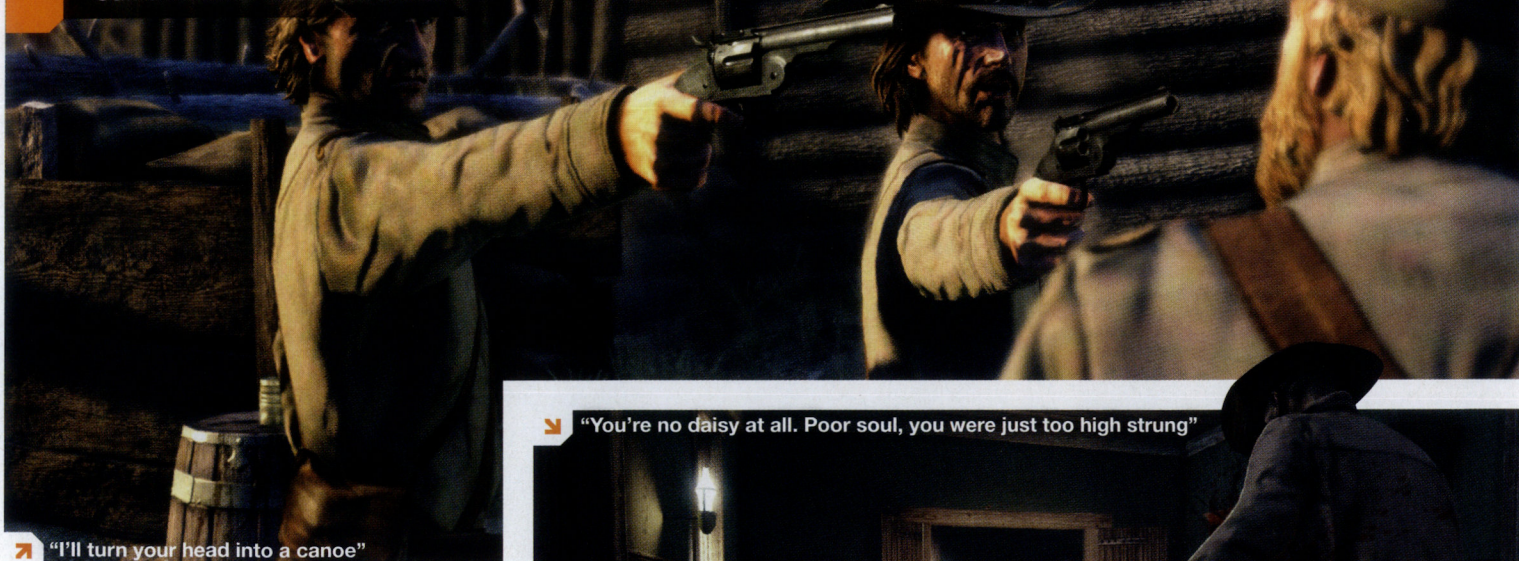
- Pete, Ray and Egon together!
- Cool trapping mechanic
- Damn funny

OPS IS...
Not afraid of no ghost



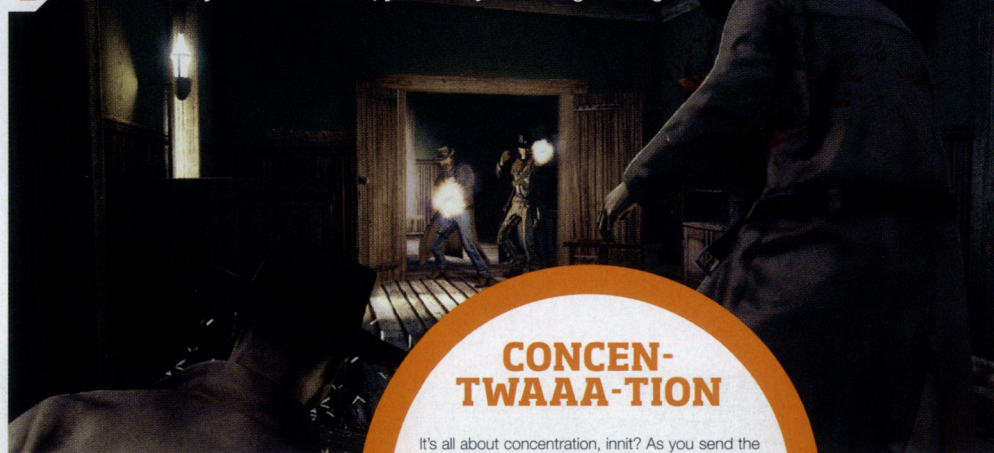
INCOMING

Call of Juarez: Bound in Blood



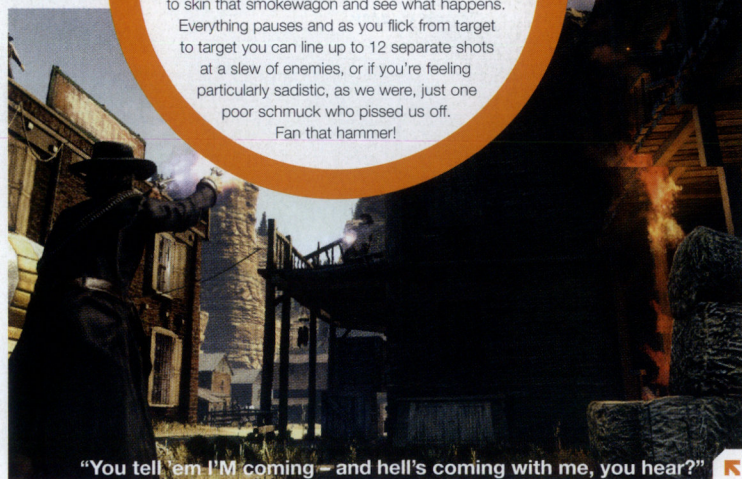
"I'll turn your head into a canoe"

"You're no daisy at all. Poor soul, you were just too high strung"



CONCENT-TWAAA-TION

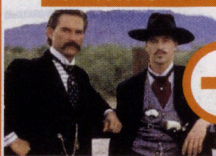
It's all about concentration, innit? As you send the Brokeback blatches to their maker (or undertaker as the case may be), each kill feeds your Concentration Meter and when it's all full up, you've got 60 seconds to skin that smokewagon and see what happens. Everything pauses and as you flick from target to target you can line up to 12 separate shots at a slew of enemies, or if you're feeling particularly sadistic, as we were, just one poor schmuck who pissed us off. Fan that hammer!



"You tell 'em I'M coming - and hell's coming with me, you hear?"

IT'S LIKE...

Tombstone



Quick draw



PS3 GENRE: SHOOTER | RELEASE: WINTER 2009 | DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT | DEVELOPER: TECHLAND

CALL OF JUAREZ: BOUND IN BLOOD

"I'm your huckleberry..."

Not since Calamity Jane's stirring recounting of the life and times of General Custer on *Deadwood* have we been so stunned, and intrigued by a Western tale. But here lies such a tale. One of two brothers bound by tragedy and revenge amidst a backdrop of the American Civil War. Welcome to the Wild Wild West.

After the lukewarm response its predecessor received, this ballsy sequel bursts out the gate from the moment the first tree shatters and falls across the trenches. With an opening supplying all the intensity and bloodshed of a classic *Medal of Honor*, or *Call of Duty*, we were nearly caught with our pants down right from the start. Pinned down you play one of the brothers McCall,

and spend most of your journey co-opting missions together, watching each other's back. The Civil War presents the perfect opportunity to road test a blood pumping selection of weapons to give you a decent taste of what's in store, and it works, and how.

To be frank, we had difficulty putting the controller down, and after barging through the first few levels you'll see what we mean. By the time we'd just set the story in motion we'd already mastered our throwing knives (which rock), knocked out a bit of rudimentary rope wrangling, got some dual wielding pistol packing action on, ventilated the enemy with a particularly brutal shotgun, manned a gattling gun as

we cut the advancing troops to ribbons, halted an incoming river assault by sinking barges with a cannon, wrapped a bridge in dynamite and watched it go boom, indulged in some horse mounted fire fights and even sunk a steamboat teeming with Union soldiers, and that's just the first two levels! It took some significant concentration (see Concen-twaaa-tion) to get us over the line.

The controls are simple, and handle like a dream, but it's the little touches that made the difference, so far. When you reload you flip your guns around 'Johnny Ringo' style, and as you expend each bullet you deliberately draw, cock the hammer back and fire, with a satisfying amount of recoil. The genuine surprise was the cover system, and while far from perfect around smaller objects like crates and barrels, proved impressive by instinctively hugging

walls around corners, popping in and out quite smoothly without the double-jointed difficulty experienced with *Killzone 2*.

There's a lot to like in *Call of Juarez: Bound in Blood*, it's gritty, bloody, down and dirty, and that's just the way we like it.

— Dave Kozicki

WE SAY

- ➡ Damn funny
- ➡ Cool trapping mechanic
- ➡ Melee?

OPS IS...
Mounting up



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IT'S LIKE...

Metal Gear Solid 4



The Dark Knight Returns

"My nipples look like milk duds!"

"You go that way, I'll go home!"

“Arkham’s version of Harley Quinn has got to be the dead sexiest we’ve ever seen, with pigtails and a corset, she looks just like a Bavarian beer wench”

“I’m sure on some planet your style is impressive, but your weak link is: this is Earth”



BAT-A-DAMMMNNN!!!!

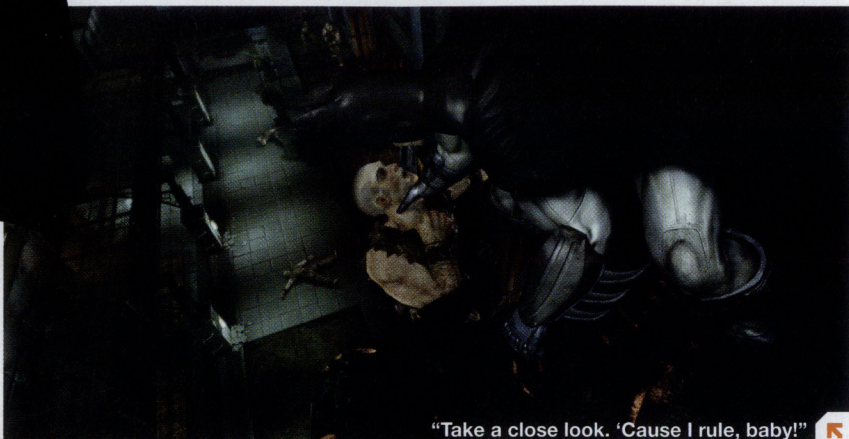
Recently the blog-o-sphere has been abuzz with rumoured details of a whiz-bang super duper edition of *Batman: Arkham Asylum*.

If you believe the hype, it will come with a leather jacketed doctor's journal and extra DLC, but the kicker is it has a frikken batarang (stand mounted so idiots don't try to take each other's heads off with it). Fourteen inches in length it looks the business and is easily one of the slickest bits of kit to geek out to. Best pre-order it right now, huh?

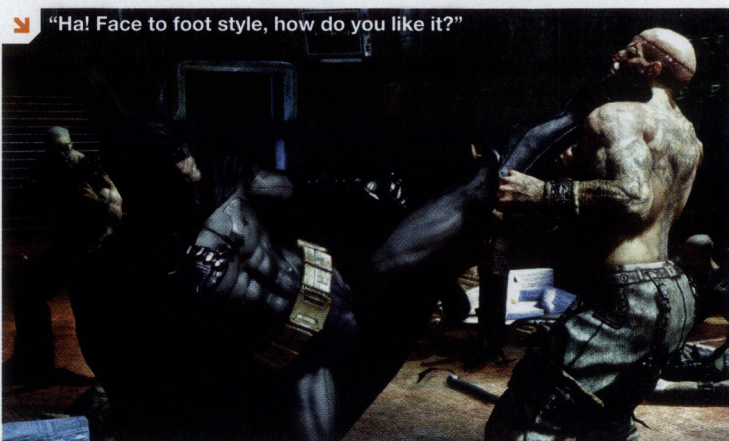
PS3 GENRE: STEALTH | RELEASE: MAY 2009 | DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI | DEVELOPER: ROCKSTEADY STUDIOS

BATMAN: ARKHAM ASYLUM

I'm not wearing hockey pads!



"Take a close look. 'Cause I rule, baby!"



"Ha! Face to foot style, how do you like it?"

To comic book aficionados, Chris Nolan is the man. *Batman Begins* and *The Dark Knight* moved contemporary views of the Caped Crusader away from the über camp Adam West lead fare (don't get us wrong, we loves us the old series, but it ain't a fair representation of the comic), took a detour past the nightmarish Schumacher neon and nipple infested atrocities ("A freeze is coming" – shudder) and landed smack bang into classic Frank Miller *Year One/The Dark Knight Returns* territory. Though the rest of the world was shocked and surprised at this break from the "Holy Blankety Blanks, Batman!" norm, fanboys breathed a welcome sigh of relief that their hero was given the respect he deserved, and not massacred yet again. The same could be said for Bats' gaming reputation. Barring a LEGO adventure there hasn't really been much cause for celebration. They've severely lacked maturity... until now.

A LITTLE FIGHT IN YOU... I LIKE THAT

Opting for a similarly dark look and tone to the certified cool graphic novels *Arkham Asylum* and *The Killing Joke*, our story begins with our favourite wing-ed rodent delivering the Joker back to incarceration at Arkham. But all is not what it seems. A recent spate of fires has lead to hundreds of the Joker's henchmen festering behind the insane asylum's walls. Leading the grinning psychotic into the bowels of Arkham, Bats can't help but shake the feeling that it was all a little too easy. Before Admiral Ackbar can yell, "It's a trap!" the Chaplain of Chicanery has decimated his captors, grabbed Gordon and let loose the lunatics, including some mutated behemoths, plus some classic villains like Killer Croc and Bane. The chickens have come home to roost y'all.

To survive this gauntlet of goons, Rocksteady strips the Dark Knight down to the bare essentials, without all the extra

gimmickry of the utility belt. You've got your grapple gun (fly fat-ass, fly!), batarangs, Detective vision (he's not called the World's Greatest Detective for nothing) and years of martial arts training to make any henchman your bitch – at least at the start.

FOUR DISARM WITH MINIMAL CONTACT, TWO KILL, AND THE LAST ONE... HURTS

In the early stages, your adversaries aren't packing heat, so you can pretty much own just about anyone. Before an enemy attacks they'll get some "Spidey Sense" wiggly lines about the cranium (sorry for the DC/Marvel crossover geekboys), alerting you of a strike. It's countering time! We find they're the best way to chain combinations together, as opposed to just lashing out and laying down the law. The added incentive is the almost clichéd now, slow-motion finishing moves, which, at times, take out several creeps with a vicious roundhouse. We went mano-a-mano with seven thugs at once, and were told that later on you'll go up against as many as fifteen at a time, so you'll really have to get your timing down pat.

CRIMINALS ARE A SUPERSTITIOUS AND COWARDLY LOT

So there we were getting ready for another out and out brawling adventure when the Joker flipped the script introducing some heavily-armed customers that ain't no joke (sorry). Welcome to a whole new dimension as Solid Snake and the Big Bad Bat become one. Time to get yer stealth on. Using Detective vision you can ascertain a lot about your environment. It has an almost x-ray effect, with points of interest highlighted in yellow, like security boxes or grapple points. You can also differentiate between armed (in red) and unarmed enemies. You can sneak

up behind these guys and deliver a silent takedown, and even swoop down from a vantage point and drop a glide kick to the face. If they're armed, once you're spotted, it's all over – but that's not all on offer. You can also scan for trace elements in the air, as we did in one early mission, trying to find Commissioner Gordon. Since we know he's a bit of a boozier, we set the visor to detect alcohol particles in the air, and followed them back to the source. Great success!

We couldn't go without mentioning the superb array of vocal talent they've brought on board. By casting two Batman legends in pivotal roles, Rocksteady has both sated the fervent fan base, and given their production an air of legitimacy. Taking on the duties of our raspy Caped Crusader is Kevin Conroy of *Batman: The Animated Series* fame, and wearing the mantle of his archenemy, The Clown Prince of Crime, is everyone's favourite space farm boy gone bad, Mark Hamill. Considering both have voiced the same characters in various cartoon incarnations, it wouldn't have been a stretch to entice them to breathe life into their gaming counterparts, and both fit the part to a T.

We're a bit scared right now. This is a comic book property that, for once, hasn't been given the shaft. It's actually looking rather impressive. If they keep on track, it could be the sleeper hit of the year. Here's hoping. **Dave Kozicki**

WE SAY

- ↑ Looks a treat
- ↑ Appropriate dark tone
- ↑ Brilliant voice acting

OPS IS... Committed





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the PlayStation®Store from 22 May.*

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INCOMING

R.U.S.E.

FOOL ME TWICE

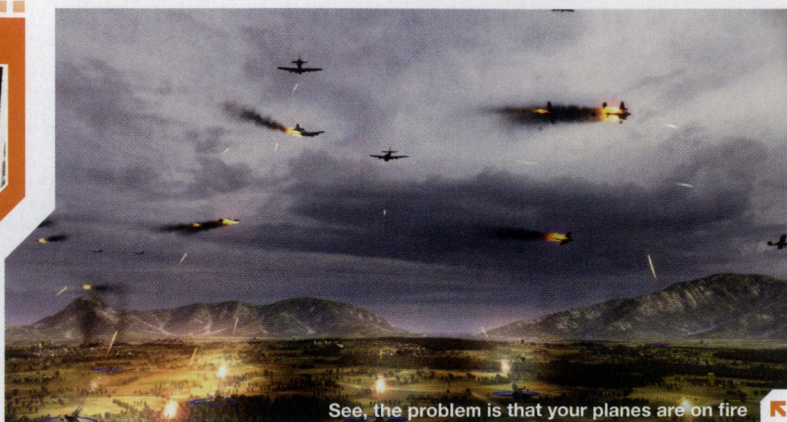
There will be loads of ways to pull the wool over the eyes of your enemies. There are tried-and-true classics, like leaving out decoys to fool spy planes, while concealing your real units with camouflage. You'll be able to disguise a full-scale invasion as 'war games' — an old fascist favourite. You'll even be able to use 'intoxication', though precisely how, we're not sure. Maybe some LSD in the water supply will have your foes seeing double.

IT'S LIKE...

Poker



A Bridge Too Far



See, the problem is that your planes are on fire



PS3 GENRE: STRATEGY | RELEASE: LATE 2009 | DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT | DEVELOPER: EUGEN SYSTEMS

R.U.S.E.

It's a trap!

The US military suffered a rather embarrassing setback a few years ago. A war game had basically been set up just so the generals at the Pentagon could pat themselves on the back for creating a clever new command & control system.

Only the enemy refused to play by the rules. The commander in charge of the hostiles used asymmetrical warfare, and delivered orders with motorcycle couriers so the allies couldn't electronically snoop on his plans.

The yanks lost an aircraft carrier, and the war game, very quickly. It was a stark reminder that war isn't just about big guns and powerful computers. It's about fooling the enemy.

War is deception.

Victory through playing silly buggers has traditionally had a limited role in real time strategy games, yet the thrill of victory

through trickery is precisely what Ubisoft has set out to capture with *R.U.S.E.* Yes, there are tanks and infantry and boats and planes. Yes, there is an incredible range of units to choose from, each with enough highly specialised stats to make a war nerd plotz. Yes, there are epic battles lifted straight from the pages of history. And yes, it's on a colossal scale, encompassing the entire wartime economy.

But the most important aspect of play is snooping out the true intentions of the enemy, while simultaneously concealing your own.

While the name hints at the grand scope of the classic board game *RISK*, truth be told *R.U.S.E.* has more in common with the work's tabletop argument-starter of choice, *Diplomacy*. You will always be forced to make your plans based on incomplete information.

You'll be able to play 'cards' that will,

say, make your own units invisible for a while by virtue of their 'radio silence,' or reveal jumbo arrows on the map showing the planned movements of your enemies. Eugen Systems is unclear on precisely how the system will work, but presumably the effects of cards will compound on each other. You might be able to, say, intentionally leak misleading intel, then out-flank your foe while he thinks he's out-flanking you. Your real intentions will be a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma — if you play your cards right.

Key battles from WWII will be re-created in *R.U.S.E.*, including Hitler's incompetent invasion of the Soviet Union. You'll also be able to go to Monte Cassino for the massacre.

Another key innovation is the IRISZOOM camera system, which will let you scale seamlessly between three different perspectives; from tactical

skirmishes to the big picture.

It's still a work in progress, and the last two games from Eugen Systems, *Act of War* and its *High Treason* expansion, received middling reviews. Will *R.U.S.E.* reinvent the RTS?

One way or the other, it'll all be over by Christmas. **James Cottee**

Err, time to bail, we think



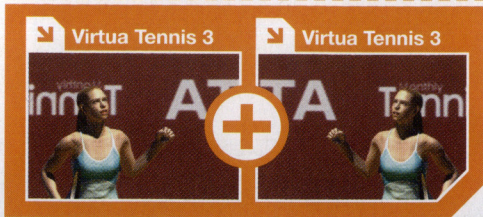
WE SAY

- ↑ War by deception
- ↑ Huge multiplayer tiffs
- ↓ Gameplay a mystery

OPS IS...
Hedging its bets



IT'S LIKE...



PS3 GENRE: SPORT | RELEASE: MAY 2009 | DISTRIBUTOR: SEGA | DEVELOPER: SUMO DIGITAL

VIRTUA TENNIS 2009

Making a racquet one more time

Top spin, slice and lob. It's been the *Virtua Tennis* recipe for a long time and this fourth home console version doesn't look set to change. The horrid cock-rock music remains to reinforce the familiarity.

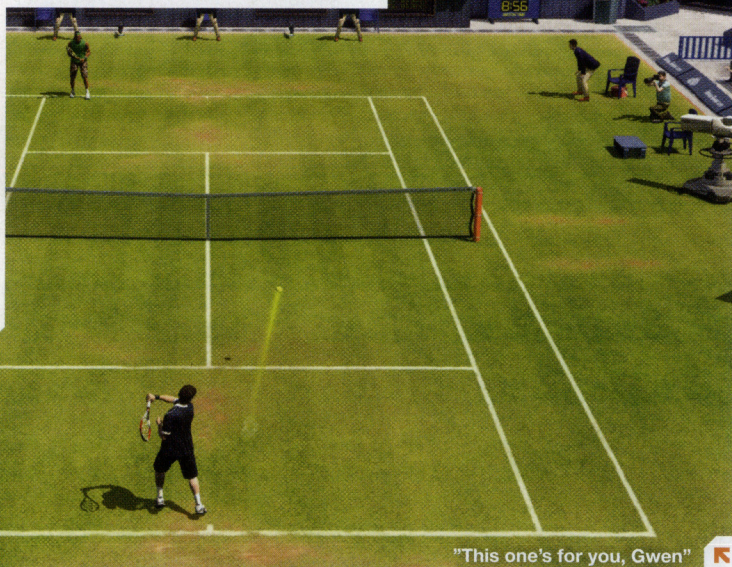
In fact, the whole package is pretty familiar to 2007's *Virtua Tennis 3*: usual modes of arcade, World Tour and exhibition return, as do the venues. There are mini games to complete within World Tour and these have been refreshed and tweaked – one of our new favourites sees you hitting blocks in a sort of Tetris-meets-Bejewelled fashion – and perennial quarter-finalist (sorry, 'tennis great') Tim Henman is your coach for the Tour. Good luck getting to the finals, then. Gameplay, too, is bereft of a major overhaul, though there's more emphasis on preparation and being rewarded for it;

lining up and building power by holding the respective button means your shot will enjoy a tighter angle and make its way over the net faster. Conversely, tardiness is punished; prepare to stumble onto one knee or overstretch and spin around, leaving the opposite side of the court wide open if you don't anticipate your opponent's next move. However, performing an overhead smash is a little haphazard, and ailing a serve's almost impossible. Being able to curve the ball whilst serving is a nice touch, though.

At this late stage, it still needs a little bit of work. Progression throughout the Tour is still built up via the Academy and the mini-games, though your early matches are pretty easy. The player we created – a 160cm, 60kg dude – still managed to lay down powerful shots seemingly as competently as Murray or Federer within the first few matches. Granted, it's arcade, but surely pissweak stats such as those have got to count. Opposing players behave in a way that's purposely designed to tell you where to hit the ball, rather than digging in a little more and making you think independently without a gaping hole on court. Animation is mostly smooth, though it'd be nice to see more individuality within the professional players. Watching Murray and Blake fall to one knee in the exact same way grates after a while. Also, a lot of the players appear to have some serious skin conditions – Nadal looks like an extra from *The House of the Dead* whilst Fed is pasty and pock-marked. Regardless of their dermatological condition, they do move across court responsively though sometimes are a bit twitchy; we managed to get them to skate on one foot when tooling around.

Like many sports franchises there's usually a number of minor changes whilst keeping the main mechanic the same. It's what makes that particular game what it is. Come review time, we're looking forward to discovering a bit more depth and change compared to 2007's version, and we're hoping for an online mode. Without that, there may be little reason to shelve *V73* in favour of this. **Paul Taylor**

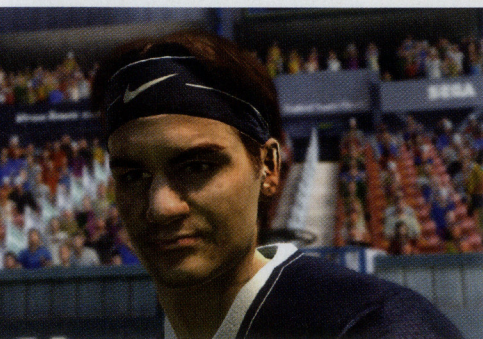
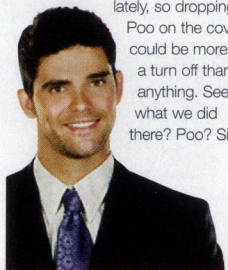
Yup, it's definitely a SEGA game



"This one's for you, Gwen"

C'MON AUSSIE

Well, there are no Aussies in the roster. Mind, there hasn't really been any big names in Australian tennis lately, so dropping a Poo on the cover could be more of a turn off than anything. See what we did there? Poo? Sigh.



WE SAY

↑ Plenty of big names

↑ Swish graphics...

↓ ...until you get up close

OPS IS...

Pulling on the headband



INCOMING

Fight Night Round 4



IT'S LIKE...

FNR3



More realism



PS3 GENRE: SPORTS | RELEASE: JUNE 2009 | DISTRIBUTOR: EA | DEVELOPER: EA CANADA

FIGHT NIGHT ROUND 4

This guy is a wreckin' machine!

Fight Night Round 4 really is just around the corner, so budding pugilists worldwide won't be waiting long for the chance to pummel the virtual snot of some of boxing's greatest.

Keen readers should recall that in our exclusive interview with *Fight Night Round 4* gameplay producer Brian Hayes two issues ago he mentioned that, not only would *Fight Night Round 4* "have the largest roster of boxers ever to appear in a *Fight Night* game", the game would have representation from all over the world – including Australia.

As a result, we're happy to announce that two Aussies will feature in *Fight Night Round 4*, and you'll be able to pit them against the best the world can offer.

Billy Dib, or 'Billy the Kid', is a Sydney-based former IBO super featherweight champion. With the support of 'Sugar' Shane Mosley and 10 time World Champion Oscar De La Hoya, Billy the Kid has real superstar potential. Billy first tired boxing at the age of 12 and showed immediate talent. He won 98 of his 113 amateur bouts and was the Australian Champion three times. At the age of 18 Billy had his first professional fight and has remained unbeaten in 20 bouts.

Anthony 'the Man' Mundine's reputation precedes him. A rugby league star turned boxer (and son of the legendary Tony Mundine), Mundine is a former two-time WBA Super Middleweight champion. His self-promotion has resulted

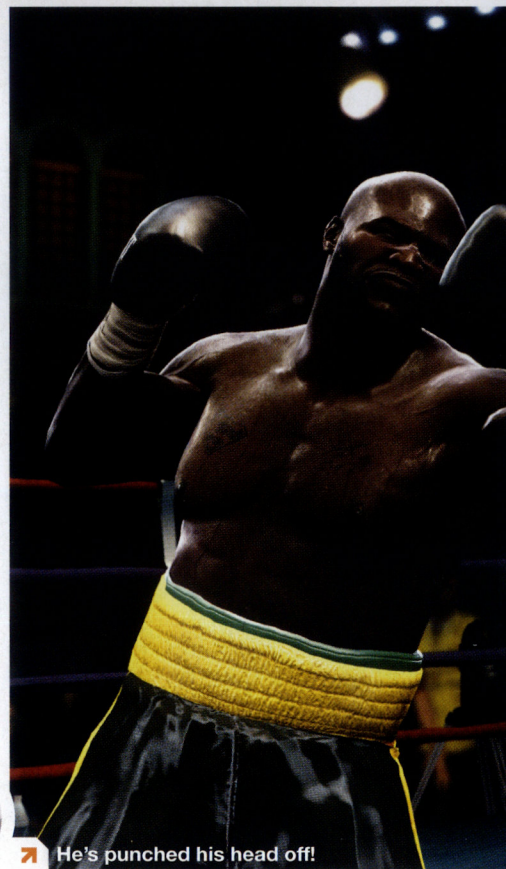
in a love-hate relationship with the public, but he has won The Deadlys Award as Male Sportsperson of the Year in 2003, 2006 and 2007 amongst others.

No screens this issue, but we'll have a review next month. **Clint McCredie**

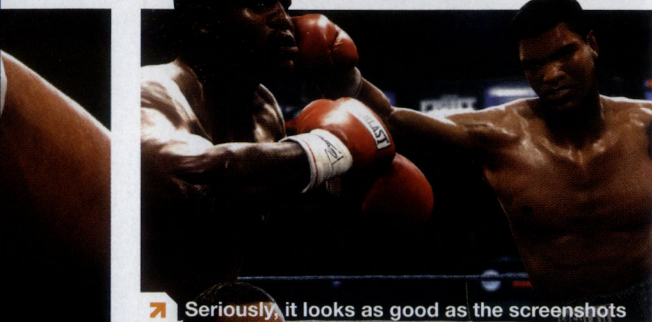
WE SAY

- ↑ Looks incredible
- ↑ Fast and dynamic
- ↓ Aw, no Kostya Tszyu?

OPS IS...
In training



He's punched his head off!



7 Seriously, it looks as good as the screenshots



7 Reach plays a real role this time around



7 Nice sword, couldn't get a bigger one?

PS3 GENRE: ACTION | RELEASE: JUNE 2009 | DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI | DEVELOPER: CODEMASTERS

OVERLORD II

Who doesn't want their own gremlin army?

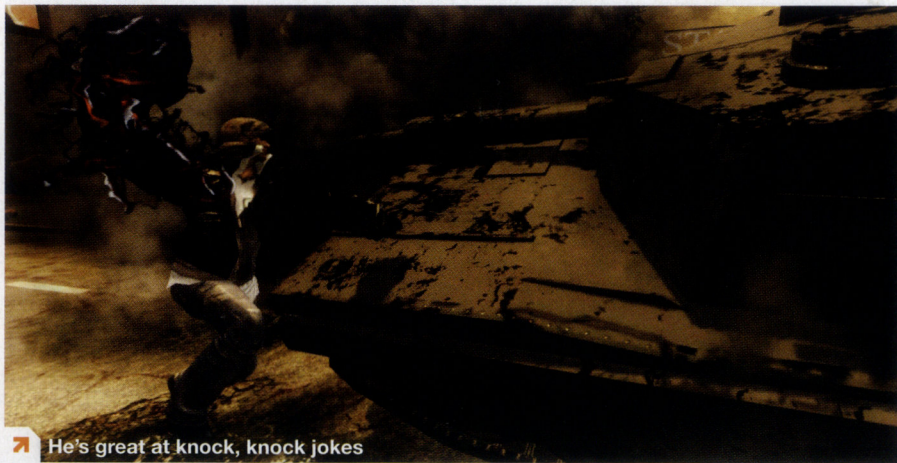
It's a tough gig, having lord and dominion over all that you see. There's the constant destruction and devastation to be maintained, a gaggle of insane minions at your beck and call, the constant threat of upstart hellish beings vying for a shot at the title – but it wasn't always like this.

Following on from the original, you begin as a child descendant of the previous Overlord, working to unleash as much chaos as inhumanly possible. The right thumbstick directs your little cackling demons to cut a path of anarchy and annihilation, and after infiltrating the village disguised as children, you lay waste to a local fair with some appropriated fireworks,

until you're unceremoniously booted out and left to the dogs, or Roman soldiers, as the case may be.

Each minion type has a different personality, the ones we used were whirling dervishes wreaking havoc, and even mounting wolves (not in that way) and using them as steeds. You can pop magical electric blasts to stun enemies, but it's way too much fun to decimate them with your boys (unless you've got a catapult handy that is, and we did).

This is shaping up to be everything a sequel should be, and with the exceptional Rhianna Pratchett weaving the tale we expect good things of *Overlord II* come June. **Dave Kozicki**



7 He's great at knock, knock jokes

PS3 GENRE: ACTION | RELEASE: JUNE 2009 | DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION | DEVELOPER: RADICAL ENTERTAINMENT

PROTOTYPE

Open-world anti-hero pandemonium!

Coke and Pepsi, Macca's and Burger King, Nike and Reebok. Let's be blunt; Activision's *Prototype* is readying to go stick-to-stick against Sony's *InFamous*. It's a case of cometh the idea, cometh the competition as both companies rally to get their open-world superhero game off to the biggest start. While we haven't played all that much *InFamous* of late, Activision recently gave us a good dollop of time to play through chunks of the near-final build of *Prototype*.

We liked. *Prototype* takes the best bits from a range of action games and mashes them together. As Alex Mercer, players snag devastating offensive

abilities and divine parkour skills as they roam about a recreation of New York City. It's a revenge story first and foremost, with Alex eager to murder the eggheads who morphed him from lab jockey to lab rat, but as with all sandbox games there are also plenty of side missions to dabble with.

Gamers should close their eyes and imagine the alien lovechild of The Hulk and Spider-Man ripping about the world of *GTA* for a solid idea of what *Prototype* will offer come its June release. Will it be the flawed prototype for *InFamous*, or will it shove a clump of kryptonite up Sony's super stud? At this point, even we have no idea. **James Ellis**

RETURN OF THE CLOAK & DAGGER!



Bolted down in their gaming thinktank in Montreal, Ubisoft is sweating its pants yellow crafting *Assassin's Creed II*, the sequel to the medieval roof-hopping riot. Can it blow away its love-it-or-hate-it predecessor and become one of the best action titles in recent years, or will it fall victim to lame sequel syndrome?

Words: James Ellis

It was the good, the bad, and the bloody. The original *Assassin's Creed* that debuted in 2007 had everything. Scintillating visual panache built around medieval architecture and design, free-running hijinks, and romantic rooftop swordplay. It catapulted up the charts like a Holy City assault. But for all the praise there was also heckling, criticism and disappointment. "The assassinations are naff," "the side quests are bollocks" all made for popular taunts.

Ubisoft was listening.

The company's prime hive is placed inconspicuously on an urban drive in Montreal, a bilingual city where waxing French waiters can switch to Obama's English mid-syllable, and culture and creativity are hung from balconies and plastered on street walls. It's a fitting nest for a company out to take risks with bold games rather than roundabout regurgitation. When *OPS* visited the studio back in 2007, as the final chinks in *Assassin's Creed*'s armour were being banged out, there was a tenable nervousness from everyone in the studio. With such a lot riding on the result, the Ubisoft team at the time was made up of over 200 brash souls. *Assassin's Creed II* is an extension of that nervous energy with no releasing of the pressure valve. The size of the team is now over 300.

"The team is working hard on increasing the overall scope of the game structure and adding more depth and variety to the core *Assassin's Creed* game play," says Sébastien Puel. He would know. Following in the heel-gutted footsteps of previous producer Jade Raymond, whose pulchritude worked conveniently with the game's pre-release foreplay, Puel has a huge task. Like the producer on any popcorn flick, it's Puel's job to guide the production team and ensure that *Assassin's Creed II* is as good as it can be when it ships in the holidays at the end of the year. If it fails, in other words, all hate mail will be forwarded to his address. Yet there's something about Puel that makes us confident in his ability. It might have to do with how closely his feelings on the first game line up with our own. While he agrees there was room for improvement, there's still a deep acknowledgement of how much it brought to the feast.

The story wasn't afraid to drape its manly minerals on the chopping block. Laced with quasi science based on genetic memory, it centered on global conspiracies and underground societies as gamers played out the role of Arab assassin Altair via the imbedded memories of the game's real protagonist, Desmond (Altair was the world's first

▼ "Hold still, I'm trying to flick this spider off"



“As expected *Assassin's Creed II* picks up with Desmond again tinkering with the Animus project. But his new memories don't take him back to Altair's Holy Land. Not that far back anyway”



MORE THAN A NINJA TURTLE

If you already feel like an underachieving loser, don't read up on Leonardo Da Vinci. This overachiever is one of history's funkiest minds and is likely the most talented chap to have lived. Apart from being a master painter and inventor, he was also a scientist, math geek, engineer, sculptor, architect, botanist, musician and writer. He conceptualised choppers and tanks and came up with designs for solar power and a calculator! All back in the 15th Century!

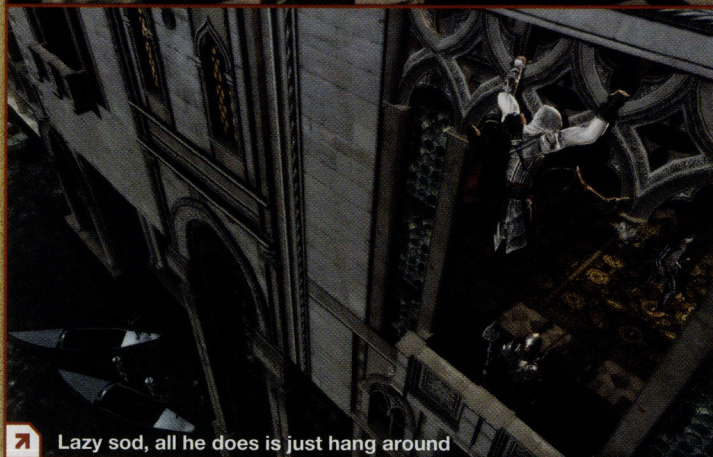


virtual virtual hero). Of course the ending was far from comprehensive. Ubisoft might have done well to hang an '80s-style 'To Be Continued' tag on it. As expected, *Assassin's Creed II* picks up with Desmond again tinkering with the Animus project. But his new memories don't take him back to Altair's Holy Land. Not that far back anyway.

Tucked away in that deep dark, likely sticky, genetic code of Desmond's is the life of another member of the Assassins, a different killer from a different time and place. Ezio Auditore Di Firenze is a noble sod during the Renaissance period in Italy. As luck may have it, he's forced to hang up his pointy boots and exchange them for the same ghostly garb as Altair when the country's ruling families give him a right, royal shuffling. Ezio isn't down with that, making *Assassin's Creed II* a Bronson-esque revenge romp in 15th Century pizza land. Along the way Ezio becomes an icon of liberty – a sort of Robin Hood meets Batman – as his enemies turn out to be the leaders oppressing the common people.

There's more to it than that, too. “On his quest for vengeance, Ezio – and Desmond through Ezio's story – will uncover a much bigger plot: a conspiracy rooted in *Assassin's Creed* that will impact the world of Desmond – our very world,” adds Puel.

He goes into no more detail than that, leaving us to speculate on whether there'll be more content set in the modern day with Desmond. Might the game feature a narrative with levels that freely hop back and forth between Desmond's present and his memories? Perhaps – but even if that's not the case Ubisoft has picked



7 Lazy sod, all he does is just hang around

a winner with the 15th Century setting, providing an environment with a similar feel to the Holy Land, yet different enough to feel fresh.

“When we defined the *Assassin's Creed* franchise, we knew we wanted to talk about pivotal periods in history: the moments where everything changes, that define the world in which we are living today,” says Puel. “That was exactly the case with the first Crusade: this period defined the balance of power between Civilization and Religion for the centuries to come.

“So when we started *Assassin's Creed II*, we asked ourselves the same question. What is the next defining moment in history? The answer was pretty easy to

8 Morris dancing by moonlight



find: in a few years and in a very small place, a handful of genius men radically changed EVERYTHING."

From politics to architecture, to the art of modern warfare and how God was to be considered in an increasingly scientific world, and even the concept of advertising, they were interesting times. They were also packed with some famous faces of history that Puel is working into the game.

"The player will also be able to meet some of the Legends of this time: the Medici – who invented the banking system, Machiavelli... When doing our research on these historical characters, we were fascinated by all the cool stories we could tell about them and how we could use recorded facts and tweak them so that it suits our story. We want the players to learn about these characters and specific sides of them, both factual and fictional," says Puel.

Expect the fictional side to be well represented. In fact we're almost surprised Dan Brown, the flavourless writer of *The Da Vinci Code*, doesn't feature on the game's credit list (or so we've been led to believe...). The most

ostentatious example of bending history to accommodate the game's story is how Ezio, at one point in the game, buddies up with his own master inventor – his own Q, in James Bond talk. It's none other than Mr. Mona Lisa, Leonardo Da Vinci himself (see 'More than a Ninja Turtle'). This brainiac is the source of Ezio's funky new weaponry and will likely also provide wise counsel before Ezio slips off to clamber over rooftops and puncture jugulars.

Like in the original, the other big characters in the game are the landscapes themselves. The cities of Jerusalem and Damascus in particular were totems of design and identity. With 15th Century Italy, the team is looking to ramp things up. Venice is shaping up to be particularly enticing. Forget diving into haystacks; the waterways of this classic Italian location will allow Ezio even more license for sky-scratching stunts sure to be nuttier than a squirrel's scrotum. Conveniently stacked hay mounds will still feature, but this time Ezio will be able to camp within them before sticking his head out to make a quick drive-thru kill.

"What we do in *Assassin's Creed II* is quite simple: take the best of *Assassin's*

“Forget diving into haystacks; the waterways of this classic Italian location will allow Ezio even more license for sky-scratching stunts sure to be nuttier than a squirrel's scrotum”

Scarves. Not tough

Creed and bring it to the next level," Puel says in a way that demonstrates part of the reason he was handed the helm is for his unfettered devotion to the original.

"Visual quality and accuracy of the look and feel of the period is a big part of the franchise. From a technical point of view, we have the chance to work with great tools – and these have improved since *Assassin's Creed*," continues Puel. "*Assassin's Creed II* will feature better lighting and even more detailed environments than the original. But certainly, the most important thing is that we are now playing with some



Extreme tightrope walking

MEET THE FACTION LEADERS

To gain acceptance with each of the factions, Ezio will have to buddy up to each of their leaders throughout the course of the game. The Thieves are headed up by renegade wannabe, Antonio, a killer thief with a heart of gold. Meanwhile the sexy Courtesans are lead by Paula, a chick who was treated brutally in her youth and now leads a halfway house/brothel (we're slightly confused too).

of the world's most beautiful urban environments: Venice, Florence, Tuscany are all a real treat for the eyes in 3D, just as in real life. Our art team managed to perfectly render not only the streets, houses, water canals and beautiful palaces of those cities, but also the unique mood and light of Italian cities of the 15th Century. Walking at night alone in the maze of streets that defines Venice is a fantasy come true. Now, it'll be possible from your living room."

There's no doubt *Assassin's Creed II* will look better than a Thai green curry after a buck's party, but what about the other crucial stuff that makes for a rollicking game? The original exceeded in the presentation department so forcefully that many of its gameplay shortcomings were ignored. Gamers were pixel struck. Despite the stunning new locale and visual pop, *Assassin's Creed II* won't have that luxury of surprise. It needs improvements across the board to compete with upcoming action challengers. Ubisoft know it. To that end, it has shuffled back to the franchise's bedrock elements and is putting them through a boot camp. From blasting open each player's sense

"But certainly, the most important thing is that we are now playing with some of the world's most beautiful urban environments: Venice, Florence, Tuscany"

Not pictured: Benny Hill

THE ASSASSIN WHO COULD FLY

Rather than create a string of doppelganger action sequences, the sparks at Ubisoft have realised that making a great game is a lot like making a salad. Variety is critical. Saying that, Puel told us *Assassin's Creed II* will be sprinkled with intense "WOW" moments that'll have players slobbering over their overalls like a dentist chair escapee. In particular Puel let out one titbit that'll likely see him fired, or castrated, or both. Thanks to polymath Leonardo, it seems man-stud Ezio will be able to climb to high points in the city and glide about with Leo's flight wings that look only marginally safer than a Garuda Airlines aircraft. Apart from getting around quickly, this'll also be handy for springing surprise strikes.

"Water" way to go

of freedom to reprogramming the crowd behaviour, sprucing up the combat, and designing memorable assassinations, everything, according to Puel, is in a process of renovation.

That starts with Ezio. The brazen Italian assassin will have a new batch of fanciful abilities up his cloak that'll help him get about, stay out of sight, and gut folk. Apart from being able to pull off massive swan dives into the Italian drink, he's also got a new Spider-Man inspired 'climb leap' that allows him to launch a couple of meters into the air while climbing vertically. He'll also be smarter on the ground. Ezio, being the hot Italian coffee bean that he is, will be able to rely on the citizens in each town more than Altair ever did.

"You've been betrayed by the ruling Italian Families – you will have to learn how to interact and use the 'common people'


or, like we call them in the game, 'the underworld', to get your revenge. Generally the crowd is on your side," says Puel.

"Ezio will be able to blend into any group of citizens, making navigation all the more fun and believable. And he won't have to be static in a group; players will be able to move around while blended, roaming the city from one group to another. The crowd is a central element in *Assassin's Creed* and for the second game; we really want the players to feel that every NPC is an opportunity.

"What's more, players won't only be able to blend into any group but will also be able to manipulate certain groups and order them to perform actions! Those specific groups are called factions. There will be the thieves, the courtesans and the mercenaries. Each faction possesses their own unique skill for Ezio to use to manipulate his enemies. For example,



The Italian Pussycat Dolls



“Our main focus is diversity in each aspect of the game: more variety in missions and objectives, more variety in gameplay, more weapons, more diverse assassinations, and deep character progressions”



HOT INFO CLUES ON WEBSITE

Like Atari's *The Chronicles of Riddick: Assault on Dark Athena*, Ubisoft has opted to do something bold with *Assassin's Creed II*'s web presence. Interested parties who own a webcam should make their way to www.assassinscreed.com, and click on the button to the left of the screen. When the webcam feed starts, centre your camera on the above icon. The software will scan it and reveal a 3D model of an assassin's arm and dagger with more images to be released in the future. That's cooler than a three-balled ninja!


Death from above

“Easy, fellas, you'll have someone's eye out”



progressions. There are no more 'X' assassinations' to perform but a story that develops through an increased amount of mission givers.”

That means, hopefully, no more lame eavesdropping missions. *Assassin's Creed II* instead will feature myriad assassination missions, intimidation sorties, and reconnaissance quests. Players will also be able to choose to engage in side quests that see Ezio silence witnesses who've seen too much or help thieves being pursued by guards. Whilst optional, these side quests will – apparently – reap interesting rewards.

“We really want *Assassin's Creed II* to be unpredictable and have the player wonder after each main assassination: ‘and now, what's next?’” says Puel. With the game set to hit shelves by Christmas this year, and with every other element looking so solid, we can only hope that'll be the case. 

the courtesans will be able to go seduce and distract groups of guards letting Ezio sneak past unnoticed.”

But there'll be a further dynamic at play. *Assassin's Creed II* will feature a ‘notoriety system’ which will tally Ezio's actions in the city into a wanted level. Ubisoft are still working on how the details of this will play out, but there's a good chance that a high notoriety level means Ezio has a greater chance of being snatched on by a desperate citizen.

As expected, pussying up and slithering into a crowd of bulging Italian cleavage won't always be possible. No, as a slimy self-righteous assassin who's job it is to chop up important dodgy folk, players will have to grow a pair and man

up in combat. Puel was only too happy to chat about new combat additions.

“Ezio will master a huge assortment of weapons: long pikes, axes and war hammers to name just a few. As those are heavy weapons, he won't have to carry them all the time: he will now be able to disarm his enemies and leave the weapons behind. Since Ezio will not be carrying a weapon at all times, apart from his hidden blade and throwing knives, he needs to be able to use his hands more efficiently when fighting. Therefore, he'll be able to use his bare hands against enemies any time in the game and perform various punches, kicks, grab movements, and head butts.”

Inline with amping up the pre-existing

elements of the game, Leonardo will at some point augment Ezio's hidden blade with... another hidden blade on his other arm. This means new assassination moves, counters and upgrades.

Despite all this sugary goodness the main reason we're excited about *Assassin's Creed II* is that Ubisoft have acknowledged that the missions and structure of the first game were as clever as a butane-sucking chimpanzee. We haven't seen the same sort of wasted potential since Joaquin Phoenix decided to dress like a hobo and start rapping. There was no doubt what Puel needed to focus on.

“Our main focus is diversity in each aspect of the game: more variety in missions and objectives, more variety in gameplay, more weapons, more diverse assassinations, and deep character

Words: Luke Reilly **Pictures:** Stephanie Goh

ART IMITATES

ART

"A year or so ago, I rashly wrote that video games could not be art. That inspired a firestorm among gamers, who wrote me countless messages explaining why I was wrong, and urging me to play their favourite games. Of course, I was asking for it. Anything can be art. Even a can of Campbell's soup. What I should have said is that games could not be high art, as I understand it."

Roger Ebert, world-famous film critic and author of *Your Movie Sucks*

Ebert might be onto something when he says videogames could not be high art. He might not. Either way, the crux of his argument seems to lie with the fact that he believes art is created by an artist. "If you change it, you become the artist," he explains.

Surely this, however, is a case of same end, different means.


What he also doesn't take into account is that, despite the fact much of your time inside a videogame is user-defined, a good many games are finely-honed to give players a well-planned and deliberately crafted experience. *Call of Duty: World at War* is a linear shooter

packed with amazing and confronting set-pieces. It's the same every time. The developers had a vision of what they wanted players to experience, and they created a digital environment in which this would be possible. It doesn't make *World at War* high art, but it certainly doesn't make it any less credible than a similarly powerful war film.

Focussing even more, if a Ferrari can find a home in the Museum of Modern Art, what does that make an interactive, in-game Ferrari? A facsimile of the real thing, sure – but you can't drive, and thus actually experience, the cars you see at the MOMA. Likewise,

if architecture can be art, what does that make Liberty City? It's a world you can experience at your own pace – you can admire each and every hand-built structure and building and marvel at the seemingly unending number of unique signs, graffiti tags, clumps of litter and so forth. Is a detailed 3D model of the Chrysler Building not on par with a sculpture or an illustration of the real thing?

We don't have any definitive answers for these questions, so we've taken this debate and done the only thing left to do to it. Take the piss.

The art world had it coming. 

Crash vs. Communism
Stop press: Brave bandicoot takes on tank!



Boulevard of Broken Games

PlayStation icons up late



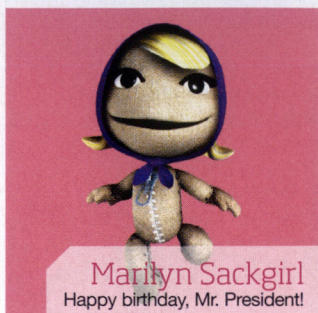
First Round First Minute
The battle of the sci-fi shooter exclusives is over before it started



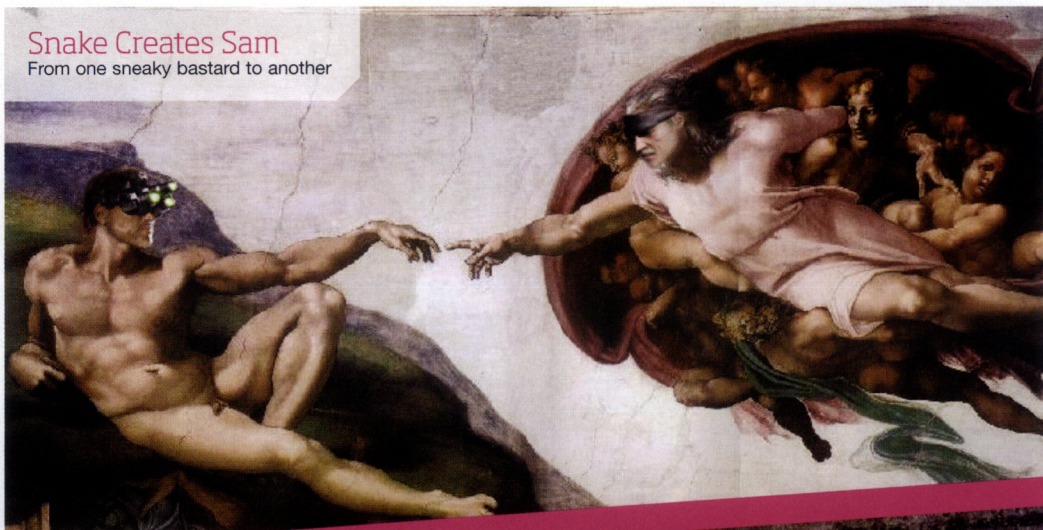
Daxter Playing Poker
They're dogs... and they're playing poker!



Marilyn Sackgirl
Happy birthday, Mr. President!



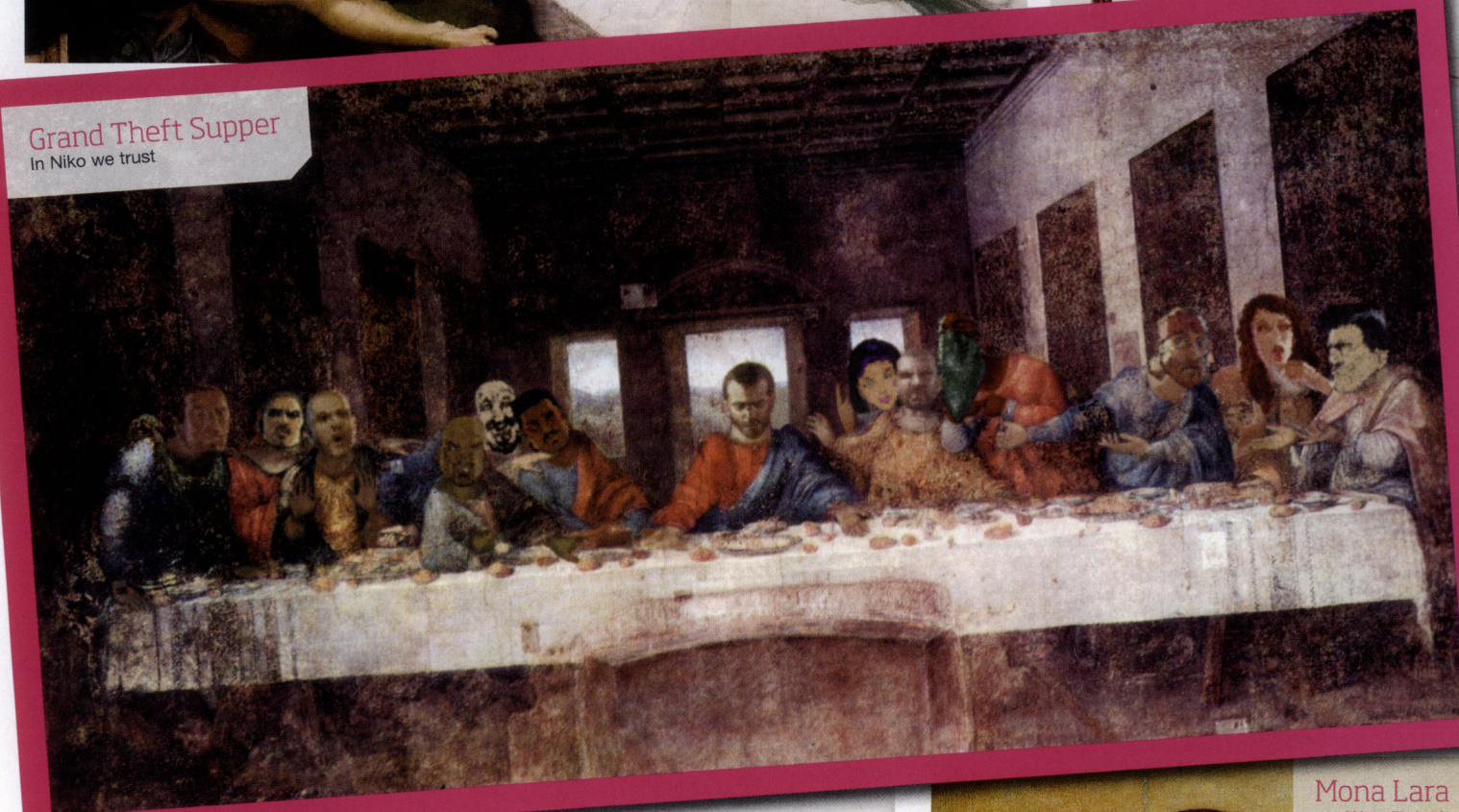
Snake Creates Sam
From one sneaky bastard to another



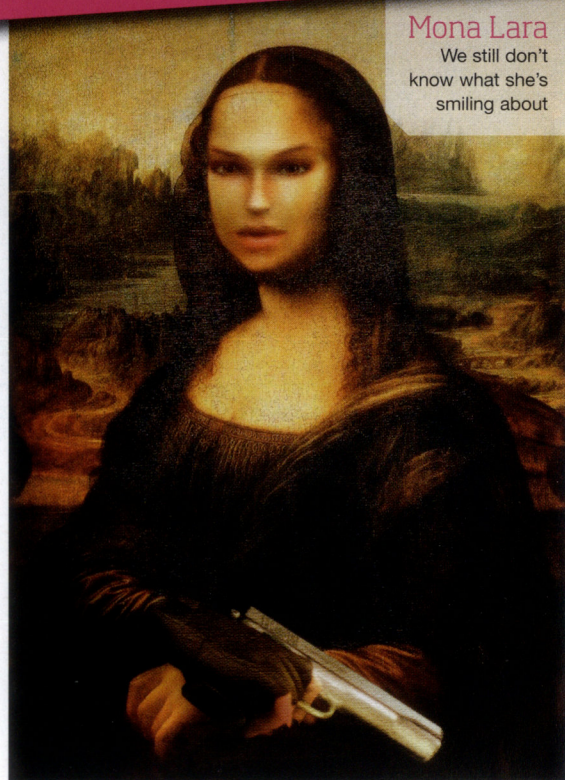
Triple Homicide Self-Portrait
This time, Agent 47 has himself in his sights



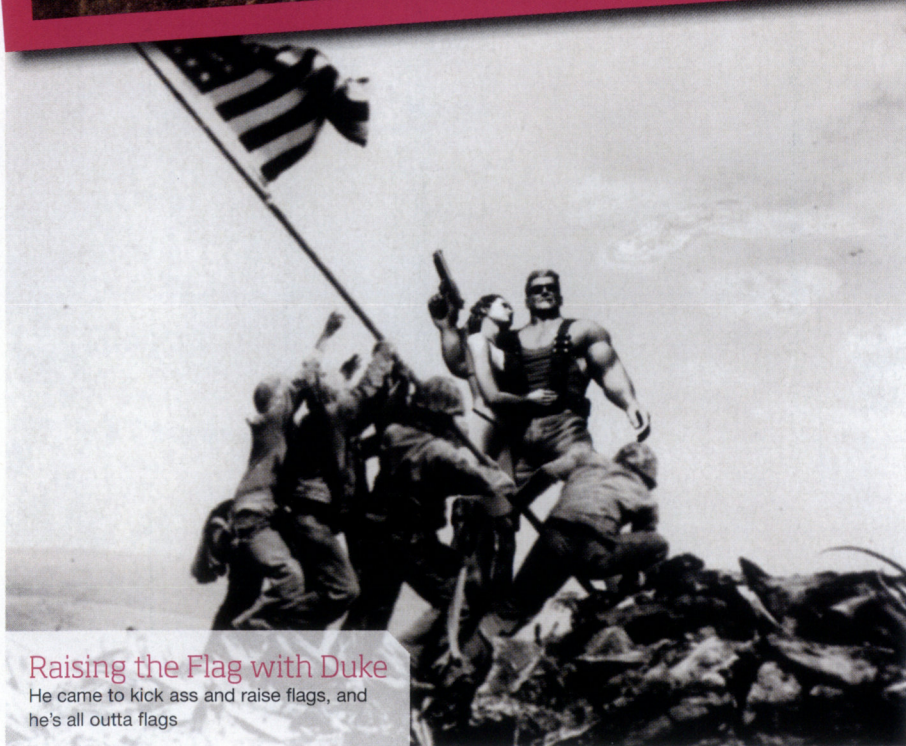
Grand Theft Supper
In Niko we trust



Mona Lara
We still don't know what she's smiling about



Raising the Flag with Duke
He came to kick ass and raise flags, and he's all outta flags





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PG

Mild Themes

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“Some games are what you expect, some games exceed expectations but games like *Red Faction: Guerrilla* come along and give you something you didn't even know you wanted”

Red Faction: Guerrilla

REVIEW RATING

PlayStation
GOLD AWARD

10 Incredible: Perfection is relative and elusive, and no game will ever be perfect. Our 10 doesn't mean a game is flawless, it means a game has done everything it set out to do in an amazing fashion and thus it deserves our highest possible praise.

PlayStation
SILVER AWARD

9 Excellent: An outstanding game, either limited by its scope, sequel status (and lack of improvement) or a few minor blemishes from being a 10. Likely one of the very best in its genre, a 9 comes with high praise.

PlayStation
BRONZE AWARD

8 Great: Still well ahead of the pack in most departments, despite a few issues here and there. Thoroughly recommended.

7 Good: A robust package that does a solid job despite a bunch of moderate problems. Enjoyable in parts, just not fantastic overall.

6 Decent: This game will have some noticeable flaws that may make it hard to recommend to those who aren't fans of the genre, but it will do more right than it does wrong. Just.

5 Mediocre: A conceded pass, if you know what we mean. Half okay, but half-busted. Might scrape by for fans, but few will want to play a game that half sucks.

4 Poor: Anything below 5, strictly speaking, is a fail – but there are degrees of 'bad' just as there are degrees of 'good'. A 4 is unrefined, partially broken and poorly designed.

3 Very disappointing: Things start to go very wrong here – fundamentally flawed in many ways, boring and close to pointless.

2 Terrible: Virtually nothing good here at all, and definitely not worth the effort of removing the wrapper.

1 The worst: Reserved for the very worst gaming could ever offer. A broken, offensive mess without a single redeeming quality.

THIS ISSUE

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We choose to review our games on a super-slick Full HD 1080p 40" Bravia X-series for the best picture possible. This sucker melts eyeballs!





INFO

GENRE: SANDBOX/ACTION
RELEASE: JUNE 2009
DISTRIBUTOR: THQ
DEVELOPER: VOLITION, INC.
PLAYERS: 1, MULTIPLAYER
PRICE: \$109.95

RED FACTION: GUERRILLA

Mars just ain't what it used to be – let's smash it up!



Way back in 2001 a PS2 FPS called *Red Faction* was released. Set on Mars, it had an intriguing plot but shonky graphics and gameplay that got extremely old extremely fast.

Red Faction 2 followed in 2002 and took one of the major plusses of *Red Faction*: the setting – and changed it... for some reason. This time you were back on boring old Earth but had the ability to shoot through most walls, which was kind of funky. However, the game was ludicrously short and easy. Like a slutty Leprechaun.

As other, better, FPS' like *Timesplitters 2* were sashaying around like red-lipped strumpets with their sexy frame rate and sense of frantic action the *Red Faction* games seemed to have had their day in the sun.

IT'S A BRAND NEW DAY ON MARS, COMRADE

Fast forward to now and *Red Faction: Guerrilla*

pops up and, by crikey, you'd barely believe it's from the same franchise. For a start the action is third-person, secondly – thankfully – we're back on Mars and thirdly

"It's just a little airborne, it's still good"



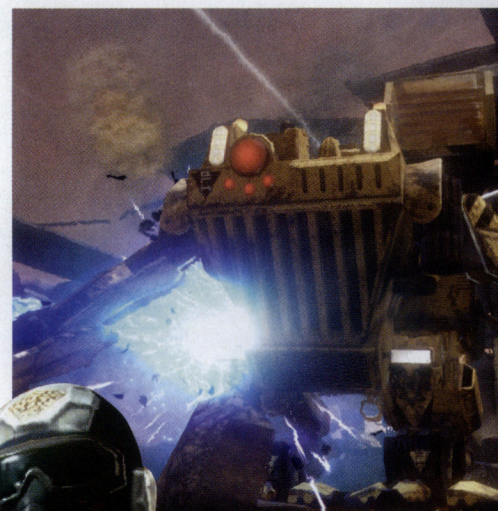
the game is an absolute gem.

The year is 2150, some 50 years after *Red Faction*. The Earth Defence Force (EDF) – who incidentally were the 'goodies' in the first game – have become giddy with power, that corrupting force, and are now basically slave traders, and worse. The EDF kidnaps people, putting them to work in camps – they rule with an iron fist and a merciless brutality.

How things change in a mere half century.

THIS IS MY GUN, THIS IS MY HAMMER - ONE GOES BANG THE OTHER BELTS THE SHIT OUT OF EVERYTHING. WE SUCK AT POEMS. SORRY

In this superior *Red Faction* outing, you'll be playing the character of Alex Mason, a miner who, after his bro is gunned down in the opening sequence, vows to rebel against the bastard EDF. Happily, he's not alone in his



Shoulder pads: They're back. With a vengeance



MULTI BRAINS

One thing very few people expected from *RFG* is a robust multiplayer mode. Yet just the other day a bunch of games' journos experienced that very thing. Whereas the game proper is long, with a plot that twists and turns, multiplayer is more, "Where's the jetpack, where's the rocket launcher?" but still a tonne of fun.

ON SIDE

There are a bunch of optional missions to do, but take care of a few as you'll find your vehicle suddenly has guns or better armour. The Red Faction looks after their own.

INREVIEW

Red Faction: Guerrilla

MARS A DAY

Terraforming an entire planet is clearly a bastard of a job. Whether you're in the Badlands with Marauder weapons blasting your arse or in Oasis stealing rich bastard's vehicles – the gravity is consistently floaty. It's not much – but it gives some of the more reality-challenged moments more credibility.



WORSE THAN
KILLZONE 2

BETTER THAN
ALMOST EVERYTHING
EXCEPT KILLZONE 2



➤ "Go ahead, mech my day" (is what robots would say, if they could talk)

hatred for these fascist bastards – so wearing his signature army green jacket he joins up with the newly-minted Red Faction, their motto: "Better Red than Dead".

NO, YOU CAN'T HIT THE GREEN BINS. SORRY

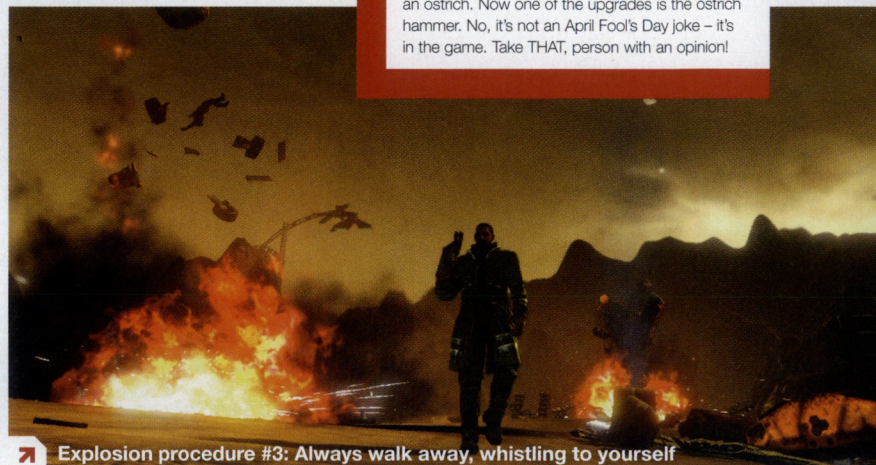
How many times have we heard the words: "Everything in the environment is destructible!" only to play the game and find, yes, there are certain destructible elements to the game but it's hardly consistent or even necessary.

Not so with *RFG*. This time around you can turn destruction into an art form. Let's have an example. Just say there's a laboratory where the EDF are cooking up some nasty new plasma weapons. The place is guarded tighter than a Scotsman's tucker chute so driving up and trying to shoot everyone, while possible, is unlikely to work. Remember you're a guerrilla fighter. Let's say this lab is hidden in a valley, a cliff hanging over it and concrete tubes running all over the place.

Mason can carry four weapons at a time, as long as one of them is the hammer. So one method could be to find the concrete tube that comes out nearest the lab, smash through the top of the tube, jump down and roll a whole bunch of explosive barrels, with your sticky bombs attached. After you've rolled down a bunch you can then detonate. If your aim is true you might just destroy the structure. If not you can risk sauntering down there and blasting survivors and giggle as the structure falls, taking care not to become crushed by it.

Another method would be to get a sturdy vehicle and fang off a cliff and smash into the lab, your vehicle laden with explosives that you can detonate remotely. Of course, as you get out of the vehicle EDF troops that haven't been crushed by debris may riddle you with holes but if you detonate at the right time you should be able to finish it off.

A third way would be to sneak into a nearby garage and steal a mech suit. There are many mech suits in the game, some hefty and powerful, some slender but equipped



➤ Explosion procedure #3: Always walk away, whistling to yourself

with rocket launchers, and some that can fly. What they all share is the ability to literally tear a building apart or smash it with your massive, metal hands.

MASON... SMASH!

To describe the sheer joy, sense of accomplishment and just plain ol' bloodlust you feel as you watch a mammoth building slide off a cliff, explode or implode on itself is hard to describe. The physics feel right – if a tad floaty (see *Mars a Day*) – and watching a smokestack sheer off another building's roof, ignite a gasoline silo, explode and rain concrete on screaming EDF agents... it's just so damn well done. We don't want to give the impression that the game's a plot-less, destruction derby either. It has something of a complex, sandboxy narrative. Mars has been divided into zones: Jackson, Dust, Badlands, Oasis, the Irradiated Zone and more. What you, and your fellow Red Faction members, need to do is systematically break the EDF's control on each area. There are two bars that you'll need to pay attention to. One red one shows how much hold the EDF has on that particular area. The other shows how much faith the miners have in the Red Faction. You can lower the EDF's hold by completing that area's missions but also doing your own quests like destroying bridges or bases or other targets of high importance. What's great about the latter attacks is that the

damage remains even after you die. Sure that doesn't make much sense but believe us, you'll be thanking the makers of the game. Similarly, if you die in a mission you can start again without having to drive around the massive map all over again.

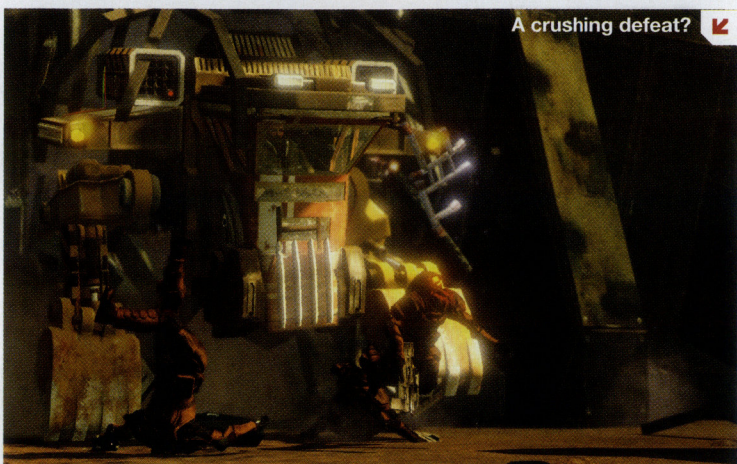
ONE MAN'S BUSTED UP BUILDING...

Money means dick on Mars, the coin of the realm is salvage. Happily you'll be creating lots of it by demolishing EDF structures.





"I miss Earth. *sniff*" ↩



A crushing defeat? ↩



"Yeah, my jacket has silver lining. What?" ↩



↩ "Wait, what planet is this?"



↩ This game is out of this world. Huh? Huh? Sigh...

This salvage helps in the creation of more powerful weapons like the grinder, the arc welder, proximity mine, rocket launcher and of course the Nano rifle – the last of which you'll do by using technology stolen from Mars' mysterious *Mad Max*-like freaks, the Marauders. This group is not political – hell we're not even sure they're human – but they attack convoys and lone vehicles, especially in the Badlands. However, getting the Nano rifle gives you the ability to melt buildings and soldiers from a distance. Other sweet additions include 34+ vehicles – including stolen APCs, mechs and a jetpack (woohoo!) plus some particularly cool surprises later on in the game.

missions, jet packs, walkers – this game feels very full: brimming with good ideas and well thought out quests.

Some games are what you expect, some games exceed expectations but games like *Red Faction: Guerrilla* come along and give you something you didn't even know you wanted. Genius. **Anthony O'Connor**

FINAL SAY:

😊 • Massive map, loads to do, interesting plot
• Beautiful graphics and some of the best destruction effects EVER

😞 • The enemy all look a trifle similar
• Blood in the game but not in the cut scenes... huh?

PULP FACTION

Red Faction: Guerrilla is fun. Yes it's deep, the destruction accomplishments are good and the graphics are excellent. But aside from that it's the kind of game where you pull off insane, crazy moves that feel arsey but realistic within the surprisingly deep sci-fi background of the game. Impress your mates with bits that they, "Have to see!"

It's a sandbox game, yes, but the unique setting and, at times, breathtaking destruction you can cause, will floor you.

Imagine being the miners from *Total Recall* a few years on. The place is mostly terraformed and has patches of grass if you can believe it, but also Marauders who will take your car, your skin and make sweet love to your skull.

Plus the ever present EDF and story missions/demolition missions/guerrilla

VERDICT:

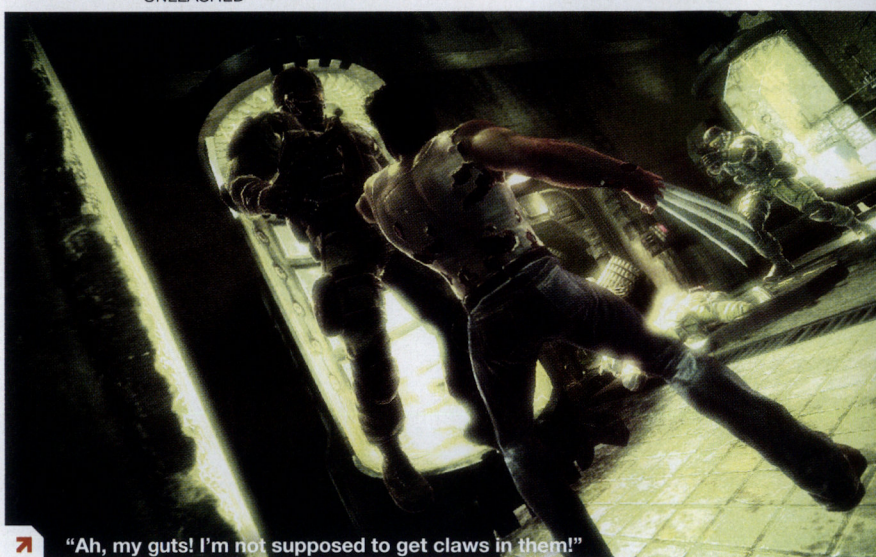
A total package. Intriguing without being obtuse, epic without making you feel lost.

9

X-MEN ORIGINS: WOLVERINE

Let's go, bub! S-N-I-K-T!

"Maybe this chopper is carrying spare Chesty Bonds..."



"Ah, my guts! I'm not supposed to get claws in them!"

The times they are a changin'. It wasn't long ago that superheroes, led by squeaky clean Superman, were awash with bright colours and brighter morals. They were icons of morality and their justice meant a stiff uppercut and ride to Fuzz HQ. But according to a poll by geek bible Wizard in 2008, Marvel's hysteric Canuck with claws is the new numero uno in the superhero dom. And he doesn't just knock his enemies out. While the comics have had to maintain a sense of restraint when dealing with Wolvie's ability to separate limbs from torsos, Activision's new title based on the Hugh Jackman film does not. It goes all out in a gib-littering, gut bursting, psychotic thrash of blood letting.

As expected it follows the *X-Men Origins: Wolverine* flick closely as it tracks the life of Wolverine before entering the Weapon X Program, and then jumps ahead three years on a revenge quest against Sabretooth. Jackman provides his voice and likeness to the film and the whole shebang is slickly presented.

But it plays predictably. There's a certain design model that designers have been using for years with these games – right back to *Double Dragon* – that's still evident here. As the player moves through a linear path they trigger an outpouring of enemies that roll out like lollies from an arcade gumball machine. The point of difference here is

that Wolverine is more angry, bloody and psychotic than Kratos would be after stubbing both toes.

Which is great. The one thing Raven really nailed with this game is Wolverine's rage. They've done this by manifesting his aggression through his move set. Not only is there a good arsenal of attacks, but they can be chained together to turn players into a rocket-propelled chainsaw. There are slashing combos, uppercuts that open into air attacks, throws, leap attacks that are huge in range, dodges that combo into tackles, tackles that slide into ground and pound strikes, super attacks that must be earned throughout the game, environmental objects to be used for instant kills, and even execution moves. It's gory enough to watch. While previous games as lame as the PlayStation 2's *Ghost Rider* have had good move sets, Wolverine's allows you to really feel the aggression.

Still, as great as the action is, *X-Men Origins: Wolverine* often feels laboured and repetitive. Many times areas are cleared out only to have a fresh batch of enemies drop in, seemingly to draw the ride out in quantity rather than quality. At one point Wolverine escapes the Weapon X compound before venturing back into another area. Why? Bloody run your hairy arse off, Logan, and get oughta there!

Perhaps time didn't permit it, but we

INFO

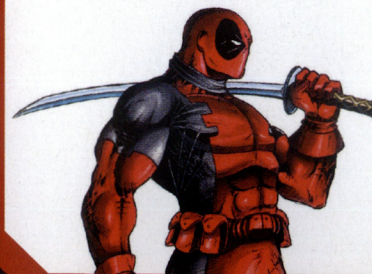
GENRE: ACTION
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION
DEVELOPER: RAVEN SOFTWARE
PLAYERS: 1
PRICE: \$ 99.95



“Wolverine is more angry, bloody and psychotic than Kratos would be after stubbing both toes”

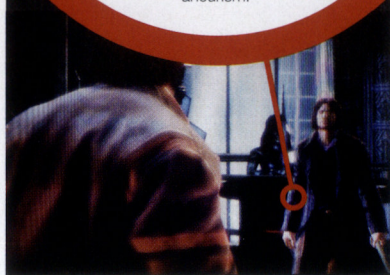
DEADPOOL

We all love that smart-arse Ryan Reynolds (particularly Anthony O'Connor who recently interviewed him). After his turn as Deadpool in *X-Men Origins: Wolverine*, there's banter he might star in a breakout film solely focused on his killer character.



SLICED CAJUN BURGER?

Anyone who's ever read any of the X-Men comics knows there's frequently been tension between Wolverine and the cagey Gambit. *X-Men Origins: Wolverine* grants an entire chapter of the game to the burly clawed one chasing the gambler through a string of Las Vegas casinos. It culminates in a huge duel on a neon sign where Gambit willingly charges up entire letters with his kinetic energy. It goes without saying, comic book geeks should not play this part while driving as they may suffer from a dork aneurism.



would've loved to have seen Raven and Activision stretch past the constraints of the beat 'em up genre, much like is being done with *Batman: Arkham Asylum*. The design issue no longer becomes, "How can we make this a great scrolling beat 'em up?" but, "How can we make players really feel like Wolverine – not just angry in-combat Wolverine, but him in his entirety?" While this offering does a great job capturing his rage, it doesn't capture his mystery, or the sort of tension he might feel before an encounter. That's frustrating because it comes close at some points. Early in the game Wolverine's regenerative powers are put into hibernation and players have to sneak through a vent



"Wait, can't you feel the sparks between us?!"

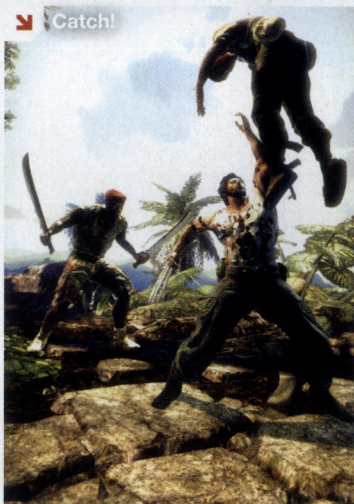
above a horde of soldiers on the prowl. It's nerve wracking enough to kick start the browning pants dance. But such moments needed to happen regularly. Not once.

With a fair dollop of repetition and a lack of tension, *Wolverine* relies on that other stalwart of beat 'em ups to add the spice. Moments – set pieces and boss battles that keep things interesting. Some of these are spectacularly successful. Early on in the first two chapters players are on the tail of an ex-team member. He's a sniper, and at one point the screen's perspective shifts to the view down his scope, leaving players to dodge his cross hairs while continuing to take down surrounding enemies. Later on there's a spectacular run of play that starts at the end of chapter three with a boss fight we simply can't spoil, followed by a run in

with Gambit (see 'Sliced Cajun burger'). However, the game really needed more of these gems.

One area of the game that is absolutely beyond reproach is the visual design. The unreal engine looks smashing, ably handling slews of enemies, an assortment of environments, and some incredible draw distances. *Wolverine*, in particular, is one handsomely rendered bastard and his healing animations deserve a bolt to the head of the class (Er, you sure you don't need a band-aid?).

So sure, *X-Men Origins: Wolverine* isn't the fresh masterpiece massacre some might have hoped for. Not enough risks were taken, and as usual, it's a one-dimensional romp. But it's a growling froth-mouthed romp all the same. Let's home there's a gutsy follow up. **James Ellis**



FINAL SAY:

- Nails the frenzied and super violent character of Wolverine.
- Lick-the-screen looks

- Doesn't take enough chances
- Repetitive enemies and stretches of play

VERDICT:
It's a head-slicin', chest beater of a slash 'em up. It's derivative though.

7



YOUR ENEMY. YOUR BATTLE. YOUR RETRIBUTION.

YOUR WHOLE WORLD IN YOUR HANDS

The war to retake the European continent back from the Chimera has begun. It's time to take the battle to them on your new Silver PSP. Protect your Mystic silver PSP with your new Resistance PSP pouch and customise your PSP with the new Resistance skin. The battle is in your hands.



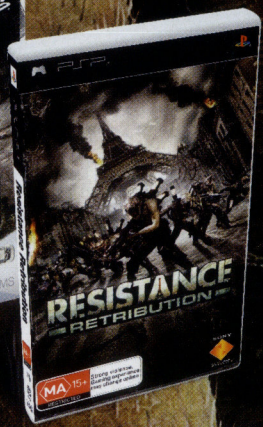
Strong violence,
Gaming experience
may change online.



ANCE
UTION

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PSP
PlayStation®Portable

IN REVIEW

UFC 2009: Undisputed

PlayStation
Official Magazine - Australia
**BRONZE
AWARD**



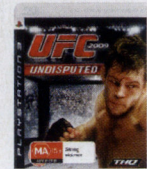
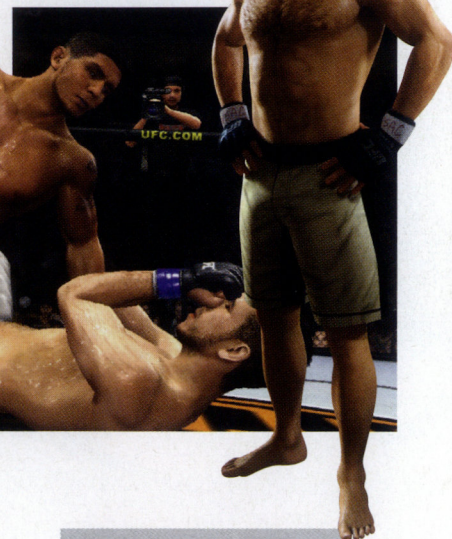
WORSE THAN FIGHT NIGHT ROUND 3
BETTER THAN EVERY WWE GAME EVER



To violence between couples, Australia says no

BEYOND THE MAT

The UFC is a US-based mixed martial arts (MMA) organisation, and currently the largest MMA promotion in the world. It began as a single-event tournament to find the world's best fighters and in the early days faced accusations of brutality and "human cock fighting" by Senator John McCain and others. There are 'rules' these days, but blokes still get the piss beat out of them.



INFO

GENRE: SPORTS
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: THQ
DEVELOPER: YUKE'S
PLAYERS: 1-2
PRICE: \$109.95

"Oh my god, I can taste you"

UFC 2009: UNDISPUTED

Manhandling...

Going crotch-to-face with the kind of guy you'd really hate to spill a beer over is something best avoided, for an exhaustive list of reasons. These UFC blokes do it all the time. It's why most of them have faces like smashed crabs.

UFC is violent. Exceptionally violent. *UFC 2009: Undisputed* is no different. And it is very, very good.

What gets *UFC 2009* over the line is its remarkable visual and audio presentation.

The broadcast-style on-screen action is right on the button, the atmosphere is buoyed by fantastic commentary and crowd feedback, and the graphics are off the chain. It's dangerous to wax too glowingly about a horde of hairy men without shirts, but the detail on the fighters (particularly as they take damage, bruise, bleed and sweat) is scary.

As we mentioned in our preview in *OPS* #29, the impeccable presentation wouldn't mean squat if the controls were bunk, and they're not. This is not running on *WWE* tech. This is brand new, and it shows. There are so many moves here; regular punches, close elbows, spinning kicks, charging knees, grapples, clinches, submission moves – it's tough to learn but it's deep, and gamers demand depth.

UFC 2009 isn't perfect though. The truly essential tutorial mode at the beginning of the game (there's a lot to master so if you want to grapple with the game properly you'll need to do it) is strangely stale. Honestly, initially it's a put off. The create-a-fighter system is quite robust, but the limiting of countries created fighters can hail from to simply place names they'd already recorded is cheap and cheeky. You can't, for instance, choose Australia – it's not there. Your country-of-origin is easily as important as your name, and it couldn't have involved more than another hour of reading place names from an atlas into a mic. You could probably also argue that *UFC 2009* just doesn't quite have the poise of a game like *Fight Night Round 3*. *FNR3* is an old game, and there truly is so much that *UFC 2009* does better – the fighting is faster and more kinetic, the brilliant commentary is far more dynamic (they make errors and correct themselves, banter and hit critical mass as the fight amplifies and the crowd erupts) and the visual fidelity, KO physics and collision detection are all slightly ahead of what EA managed with its slugfest. Thing is, *FNR3* is still a slightly more finessed fighting experience – it

just makes a slightly better fist of letting both players know how the fight is going. We know any one punch can end a real UFC fight, but regular and sudden flash KOs against your mates in *UFC 2009* can be a trifle unsatisfying from a gameplay perspective when you're on the receiving end (we will qualify though, dishing them out is awesome).

Still, this is so far ahead of what Yuke's produces with its work with *WWE* it's just not funny. *UFC 2009* is a surprisingly complex and supremely credible sports brawler. You'll need to be a concert flutist to have the finger dexterity to really come to grips with how Yuke's has fully exploited every button on the DualShock 3, but it does cater for different levels of players. Casual players will likely stick to trading punches and kicks while seasoned fans will set about mastering the grapples and transitions. The latter facing off against the former will result in some hugely mismatched bouts ("What do you mean I have to spin the stick to get your balls out of my face? I just want to stand up! Hold this and press what?") but you could say that about any sports title.

A little hard to tame, but most impressive. **Luke Reilly**

FINAL SAY:

- The presentation and visuals are well above-average
- Exceptional two-player versus play
- Fans are flocking in droves, but it just still doesn't have the profile of boxing
- Lifespan could be an issue - two-player is gold, but it gets a tad samey solo

VERDICT:

Exceptionally presented, addictively brutal.

8

WE DON'T NEED ANOTHER HERO

We've written about *Prototype* at length over the past 12-months, ever since we heard about the high-concept open-world antihero spectacular. The good news is that it's been classified, and it's nearly here.

Alex Mercer is a walking, talking biological weapon – an uncompromising killing machine who, after waking up on a morgue slab, sets off on a revenge-fuelled quest that will bring New York City to its knees. With superhuman strength, speed and agility, plus healing and shapeshifting abilities, Alex Mercer is set to raise the bar for gaming's hardest hero. Not only can he transform his appendages into deadly hammers, blades and claws – he can also leap massive distances, sprint up skyscrapers, toss cars, absorb the abilities and identities of fallen foes and cover his body in a thick layer of bullet-proof biomass. Nice.

Those crazy Canucks at Radical Entertainment have been beavering away on this bad boy for too long, so here's your shot at getting your hands on the results. For the chance to win one of five copies up the upcoming smash *Prototype* just answer the following question:

**IF YOU WERE A SECRET GOVERNMENT
SUPER-EXPERIMENT GONE WRONG
WITH MEMORY LOSS, WHERE WOULD
YOU LIKE TO WAKE UP?**

Entry instructions on page 25.

GAMEPLAYER CODE WORD: PROTO



7 Capt. Average and the Peanut-head Brigade



INFO

GENRE: ACTION
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: SONY
DEVELOPER: SLANT SIX
PLAYERS: 1-32
PRICE: \$49.95

SOCOM: CONFRONTATION

Conflict resolution. With guns

WORSE THAN WARHAWK | BETTER THAN CONFLICT: DENIED OPS



7 "Honest, I didn't touch it, it just exploded on its own"

LEAN, MEAN FIGHTING MACHINE

Previously, SOCOM has made good use of the d-pad for more subtle movements like the 'stealthy lean'. Unfortunately, they decided to make use of the SIXAXIS controls for *Confrontation* and leaning is now accomplished by way of a vigorous tilt of the controller. A clever idea on paper it's entirely frustrating in practice, especially if you tend to 'steer' with the controller when taking regular corners. Horrid!

On its North American release last year, *Confrontation* was slammed for being a buggy mess of a game. It was a console-crashing turkey of epic proportions and yet fans stuck with it, holding out for an elusive 'silver bullet' patch. Remarkably, the cure-all patch appeared, and the horrible lag, random disconnections and console-crashing bugs have all been ironed out in time for the Australian release.

Don't rejoice just yet, though. The patch may fix the obvious, game-breaking flaws, but are we left with a good game at the end of it? The short answer is almost. This is a game that does everything by the book.

The developers have played it safe, and in their bid to avoid making mistakes have managed to produce a game that is perfectly average.

Gameplay is standard issue, bordering on the generic.

As an online-only title this is, of course, compounded, by the absence of a single-player campaign. Without any kind of back-story grounding the online play it all feels a little shallow. Are the guerillas the heroic underdogs, or filthy rascals that need to be stamped out? With no emotional investment in the game, taking sides is reduced to nothing more than making up the numbers. Once the maps load (which can take an eternity), it's your regular third-person tactical shooter, and there's really nothing new or



7 Behind Michael Phelps' place



7 A running race. With guns.

innovative to speak of.

Customisation options ring hollow too. While there are fatigues for all seasons, faces are limited to a few uninspiring peanut heads, and the weapons are uniformly beige. Changing armour and carrying heavy weapons supposedly attracts movement penalties, but the effect in-game is negligible.

Post-customisation little remains but to get stuck in and there are innumerable channels to choose from, many of which boast 250+ players a piece. This level of choice is not reflected in the games themselves though, with very few maps to choose from (although we're promised more by way of DLC at some point). It doesn't take long for this to feel like a rankings grind, but if that's your thing this will be heaven – the ladders and leaderboards are exhaustive.

This is not a bad game, it's just not a great game. Many of the issues that plagued the earlier North American release have been addressed by the recent patch, and the overall experience has soared as a result. The bustling population is a significant draw card, and having instant access to games makes it easier to overlook the flaws.

Confrontation ticks all the right boxes, but lacks the flash-bang for your buck to make it a must buy. **Alan Moore**

FINAL SAY:



- Masses of people online at all times
- Seemingly realistic weapons



- Communicating with hyped-up Americans is painful
- Five maps? It doesn't take long to become repetitive

VERDICT:

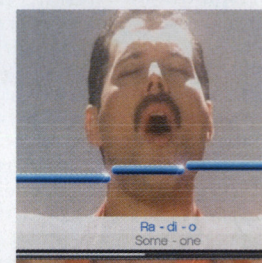
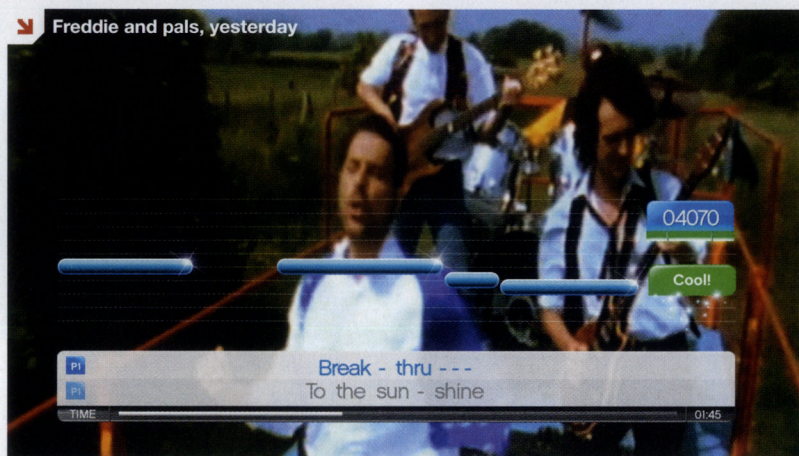
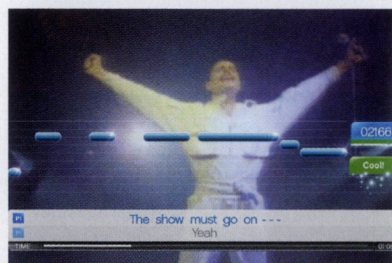
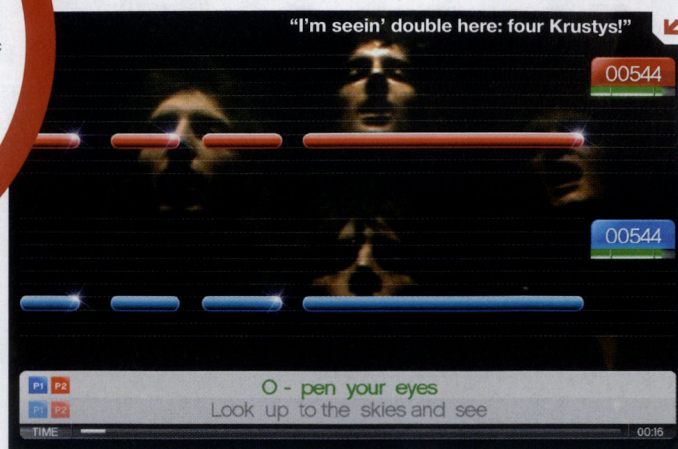
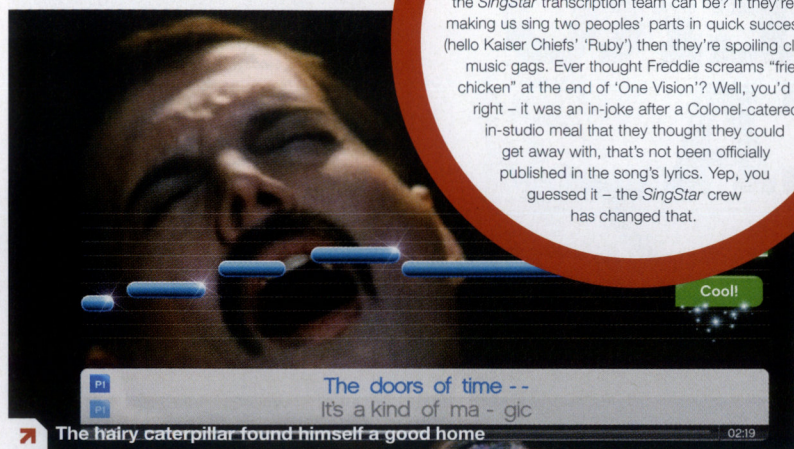
A sturdy, dependable effort that fails to excite. If it was a colour, it would be beige.

6

**GIMME...
GIMME...
GIMME...**



Has anybody else noticed what killjoys the *SingStar* transcription team can be? If they're not making us sing two peoples' parts in quick succession (hello Kaiser Chiefs' 'Ruby') then they're spoiling classic music gags. Ever thought Freddie screams "fried chicken" at the end of 'One Vision'? Well, you'd be right – it was an in-joke after a Colonel-catered in-studio meal that they thought they could get away with, that's not been officially published in the song's lyrics. Yep, you guessed it – the *SingStar* crew has changed that.



INFO

GENRE: PARTY
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: SONY
DEVELOPER: LONDON STUDIO
PLAYERS: 1-8
PRICE: \$59.95

SINGSTAR: QUEEN

Spare him his life for a pork sausage tea...

O! You! Yeah you, el Gamer extraordinario! Did we just see you turn your schnoz up when you saw the word (well, it's a conjunction actually, but anyway) 'SingStar'? Get your bloody hand off it, now!

Why? Well, think about it. Sure, you may be all serious, "hardcore" and Killzoney (not to be confused with calzone – yum!) and stuff, and the thought of waggling a microphone in front of your gob may appeal about as much as, ooh, exposure to daylight, but just think for a millimoment. Stuff like *SingStar* appeals to real world people – you know, the type you look at naked on dodgy websites and hold hopes you may actually interface with at some point. Now to maths – something that continuing with this blatant stereotyping tells us you like, lots. There are many more real people on planet Earth than there are those of your ilk. So, ipso facto, viz a viz and all that kind of wanky wordy stuff, the fact that these people dig on the likes of *SingStar* keeps the likes of Sony in the likes of business – meaning

that you get your *Killzone* and other original IPs. Which is good – so stop with the hate, okay? (*Is anyone still reading?* – Ed)

Sure, embarrassing yourself due to a lack of vocal talent may not be appealing to everybody, however get a bunch of friends together and that ain't the point. The point is to participate and have fun – even if it is, erm, imbibe-inspired. Which brings us to the latest in the rather stretchy line of *SingStar* releases to have burped forth into the world; *SingStar: Queen*.

Yep, Freddie, that guitarist guy with the big hair and the other two, one of which looked disturbingly hot dressed as a chick in the 'I Want to Break Free' vid, are the second band to be given the all-to-themselves disc treatment after Swedish hyperstars ABBA, and they deserve it.

You may not think you know that much of Queen's output, but start listing the titles on this here disc and there won't be much that doesn't make a bell do its belly stuff with the ringing and resonance and all. 'Killer Queen', 'Another One Bites the Dust', 'Crazy Little Thing Called Love',

'We are the Champions', 'We Will Rock You'... Then there's the BIG stuff like 'Bohemian Rhapsody' and fave of every *Shaun of the Dead* disciple, 'Don't Stop Me Now'.

Add what have been given the duet treatment like the delightfully silly 'Fat Bottomed Girls' and the ace David Bowie-infused 'Under Pressure', this is a package that, whilst offering absolutely nothing new to *SingStar* on the PS3 save for a buttload of Freddie, delivers better bang for your buck than all of those dartboard compiled volumes that we've tried to like so far sticky-taped together. **Amy Flower**



WORSE THAN
MUSE

BETTER THAN
MIKA

FINAL SAY:

• Freddie = awesome showman
• Freddie = awesome voice

• Mere humans like us = shite voices
• No 'Flash' (OH-OH!)

VERDICT:

Nothing new, but add enough throatal lubrication and it's a hoot.

7

GUITAR HERO METALLICA

Gimme fuel...

Guitar Hero Metallica isn't an entirely straightforward game to review. On the one hand, it's mostly unsurprising. Coloured buttons dance around the screen, and you strum them on your plastic guitar and flail about on your plastic drums as they glide towards the bottom of your tele. That much you already know.

There's more worth noting, however. *Guitar Hero Metallica* is the second of Activision's themed *Guitar Hero* titles, and it's better than we anticipated. The set-list is phenomenal, plucking gems from the length and breadth of Metallica's long career and adding a host of great supplementary songs from some equally great supporting acts. Career mode itself, while we're on the topic, is nice and stylish, beginning with a recreation of a contemporary Metallica stadium show but quickly segueing into a story mode with a slight twist. Career progression is handled in the usual fashion, although Neversoft has taken a leaf out of *Rock Band*'s book and you now only need to earn a certain number of stars to unlock the next venue rather than completing all the songs in a tier.

Changes from *World Tour* don't stop there either; individual performance and Star Power meters are now located next to each track rather than grouped together in the top left-hand corner – something we criticised *World Tour* for. You can only ever choose lead or bass (there's no rhythm) but there is an Expert + mode for drums – which allows the use of two drum pedals (via a splitter) for double-kick bass. The music studio is still present, joined by a 'Drum Over' mode (players can select any song, and play freestyle drums without any fixed drum track). *Rock Band 2* has a similar mode, and it's rad.

Guitar Hero Metallica is precisely what *AC/DC Live: Rock Band* ought to have been. We don't know who's to blame for that – whether or not more cooperation from *AC/DC* would've resulted in a far more Acca Dacca-themed experience, or whether the game was never destined to be anything more from the get-go – but it was significantly lacking. Fact is, *Guitar Hero Metallica* really is a blazing example of, at the very least, how to present a one-band-themed rhythm game. From the

moment Metallica saunter out on stage to the strains of Ennio Morricone's 'The Ecstasy of Gold' and launch into 'For Whom The Bell Tolls' to the incidental set dressing in the practise studio, the whole production smacks of the heavy metal Hall of Famers. The only element we would like to have seen plucked from *AC/DC Live* would be the ability to export tracks for use in *Guitar Hero World Tour*. To clarify, we very rarely play *World Tour* over *Rock Band* – but we do imagine regular *World Tourers* would've fancied such a facility.

It would've been easy to approach *Guitar Hero Metallica* with a considerable amount of cynicism, particularly after *Guitar Hero Aerosmith* demonstrated itself to be quite futile. *Guitar Hero Metallica*, however, is a far more competent music game than its predecessor. We're generalising here, but Metallica songs are faster, longer and

contain more notes than Aerosmith songs – so it stands to reason they're more suitable for a music game, because they're more fun. They are, and it is.

For music game devotees, *Guitar Hero Metallica* provides a wealth of challenge and a heap of quality tracks to shred. For Metallica tragics, it's greatest 'Best of' in history – because it requires audience participation to function.

Guitar Hero Metallica crushes *Guitar Hero Aerosmith* like Napster and takes a Bourbon-infused piss on the Steven Tyler debris, and it improves on a number of *World Tour*'s foibles. Heartily recommended then? Yes.

Luke Reilly



RIDING THE LIGHTNING

Metallica has released nine studio albums, two live albums, two EPs, 24 music videos, and 45 singles. They've also won nine Grammy Awards and had five consecutive albums debut at number one on the Billboard 200 (making Metallica the only band ever to do so). They've also appeared on *The Simpsons*. Lars still seems like kind of a whiner though.



FINAL SAY:

- Improves on *World Tour* in a number of ways
- 'Tuesday's Gone' by Lynyrd Skynyrd. Win
- Still doesn't have the same 'live' feel as *Rock Band*
- All this non-exportable, non-compatible stuff is the exact opposite of *Rock Band*'s 'one platform' method



INFO

GENRE: MUSIC
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION
DEVELOPER: NEVERSOFT
PLAYERS: 1-4
PRICE: \$89.95, \$179.95



King Diamond's makeup and jewelry altered to avoid offending religion. ROCK AND ROLL!

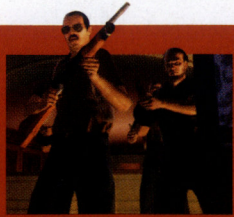
VERDICT:

Arguably the best *Guitar Hero* game since *Guitar Hero III*.

8

WE ARE FAMILY

Assembling your crew is one of the more interesting parts of the game. You can take them with you on missions or send them off to protect or kill. They also come very much in handy when you're putting a hit on a made guy. You can also upgrade them, allowing for multiple abilities.



No hammers allowed, sorry



KNUCKLEHEAD

As a merchandise treat for reviewers, EA (in America) sent out brass knuckles to tie in with the game. As these weapons are illegal in many states the company realised the mistake and recalled the items. Oops!

THE GODFATHER II

"I know it was you, Fredo, you broke my controller! You broke my controller!"



INFO

GENRE: ACTION
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: EA
DEVELOPER: EA REDWOOD SHORES
PLAYERS: 1
PRICE: \$99.95

It's kind of fitting that film properties like *The Godfather* and *Scarface* get made into sandboxy, open-environment games. After all, *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City* owes a lot to *Scarface* and other *GTA/Saints Row*-style games have borrowed liberally from *Goodfellas*, *Boyz n The Hood*, *Casino*, *Carlito's Way* and pretty much every other decent – or rubbish – gangster film ever made.

That caveat in place, we all know great films rarely translate into great, or even good, games.

"EH, NICE CINEMATIC PROPERTY YOU'VE GOT HERE..."

That's not to say *The Godfather II* is a bad game, point of fact it has some nice touches and clever ideas. You play the part of Dominic – an ambitious mobster whose

appearance you can customise at the start of the game.

Every aspect of the game's controls falls into the traditional sandbox mode: third person view, the ability to jack cars, you can shoot anyone in the street and, of course, try to escape the cops.

You'll also go on a series of missions and this is where things get interesting. After an exciting opening in Cuba, you'll find yourself in the Corleone compound in New York.

From there you must take over businesses. You do this by heavy arming the owner. Interestingly you can't kill them. This is odd as you could gun down fifty nuns or cub scouts on the street but you have to take over businesses with more finesse. Find the owner's secret weakness: a fear of heights, smashing their store, choking them – whatever it is you have to scare them into submission. Once this is done you can pay guards to keep the place safe or use one of your trusted soldiers for maximum protection.

Get three businesses under your thumb and you'll have a crime ring. This will increase your pay day exponentially but also leave you more vulnerable to enemy attacks. This is why you need to choose a crew (see 'We are Family').

"STUGATZ! THIS SOUNDS COMPLICATED!"

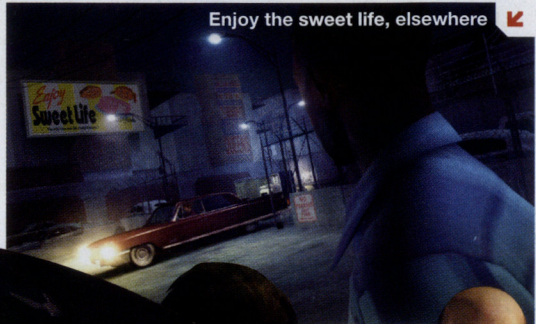
It's actually not, thanks to the Don's View mechanic. This is where you can see whatever city you're in as a three dimensional map. You can view how your various business concerns (or fronts) are going, get the intel on a rival's business – say they have ten guards – you'll need to bring a few heavies, plus if they launch an attack on one of your businesses you can either drive there yourself or send one of your crew – heavies who have special abilities like demolitions, medic, safecracker and so on.

It sounds pretty good, right? Yeah, but it's just too damn easy! You could probably finish it in the time it takes you to watch the *Godfather* trilogy as nothing seems to have consequence. You get arrested/killed/stuff up a mission and you're back on the street with all your guns, goons and businesses untouched.

When your foes attack they are dispatched so easily it's almost embarrassing.

Combine that with frequent glitches and an abrupt – and frankly stupid – ending and you have a pretty ordinary experience you could knock over in an afternoon. Try renting first instead of buying, capiche? **Anthony O'Connor**

Enjoy the sweet life, elsewhere



WORSE THAN
ANY GTA GAME

BETTER THAN
FINDING A HORSE'S
HEAD IN YOUR BED

FINAL SAY:

- Good looking sandbox game brimming with gleeful violence
- The Don's View mechanic is extremely well implemented...
- ... perhaps too well as the game is extremely easy and fairly short
- Glitches, repetition and samey gameplay gets old fast

VERDICT:

The Godfather II starts off as a robust crime caper, but it alienates fans of the film and confuses those who haven't seen it.

6



INFO

GENRE: ACTION
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: WB
DEVELOPER: GRIN
PLAYERS: 1
PRICE: \$99.95

That's a unique way to paint your wall



WORSE THAN
 MATT HAZARD



BETTER THAN
 BEING SHOT



WANTED: WEAPONS OF FATE

Wanted: a reason to buy

There's a growing body of scientific thought that poses an intriguing notion: that there's no such thing as talent. Research shows time and again that world-class skills take around 10 years of intense effort to master. It's common sense, really. Look at the very first comics of *Naruto* or *Penny Arcade* from a decade ago, and see what the same artists are capable of today. Their works are barely recognisable.

There are no exceptions to this rule. Tiger Woods won golf tournaments as a teenager, but that's only because he'd been practising since he was one.

But, alas, reality is at stark odds with the cuckoo escapist power fantasy of *Wanted*. The premise is that a certain elite few have the astonishing talent of being able to bend the path of bullets, allowing them to shoot people behind cover. This one gimmick presumably trumps firepower (today's rifles can shoot through most masonry), superior numbers, IEDs, and any number of other perfectly effective means of killing people.

Add in the requisite conspiracy theory artifice, and you have a world view designed to appeal to mentally subnormal 11-year-olds. *Wanted: Weapons of Fate* has game mechanics to match.

SLIP 'N SLIDE

It seems that all the young anti-hero Wesley Gibson ever does is take cover, duck and slide between alternate sources of cover, and occasionally shoot people with his one weapon, an automatic pistol. Levels are highly, highly linear. There is zero chance of getting lost. And since Wesley takes up such a huge amount of screen real estate, presumably to get maximal value from the film licensing costs, you are unlikely to forget who it is you're playing.

They've aimed for a fast-paced play experience, like in *The Club*, but the controls are so sketchy it's impossible to get any kind of tempo going. Almost as if to acknowledge that the normal run-and-gun action isn't up to snuff, they've added in bullet time-style quick-time events to occasionally vary the pace. These may surprise you, at first, but they are so slow-moving and simplistic to the point of being surreal.

The cover system, too, is a bit weak. *Kill Switch* did it first, and did it better. Hell, *Rogue Trooper* did it better. And since you can see and control where you're shooting, the 'blind fire' option isn't blind at all. While it's supposed to be a means of suppressing the enemy so you can dash around and out-flank him, it's often accurate enough to

take down enemies wholesale.

And since your health rapidly regenerates, and enemies only take a few shots to kill, more often than not it's equally effective to just run up to a villain and shoot him.

Since there are little to no consequences for employing sloppy tactics (at least, on normal difficulty), there is no tension. No tension, no immersion. No immersion, no game.

Some of the shoot-outs resemble those famous firing-from-cover sequences in the *Naked Gun* movies, where Frank Drebin and the baddie of the week would literally be a few feet apart, seemingly oblivious to each other's presence as they take turns to squeeze off un-aimed shots. Though when the Zucker brothers did it, it was funny. Funny 'ha ha'. This is definitely funny strange. The camera gets confused at such close ranges, and with a huge Wesley on the screen, it can be a nightmare to try and get off even one shot against that irritating French mercenary who's firing a sub-machinegun into your face.

CQC offers some small relief, however, in the form of one-hit-kills via a single tap of the circle button. Once melee begins, you're treated to a different camera angle as Wesley reaches, say, over a marble kitchen top and stabs a man in the head.

Each kill via knife brings with it a small measure of catharsis; enough to keep a constant eye out for the distinctive, vulgar logo of a dagger and © button in the bottom right of the screen that signals another mercy killing is on the cards.

The character models are off. While detailed, the virtual head of the protagonist has an inhuman, plastic finish. His wide, wavering eyes add to the impression that he's a showroom dummy that's just come to life, and unsure of what to do with his new existence. Unlucky for him, there aren't that many options.

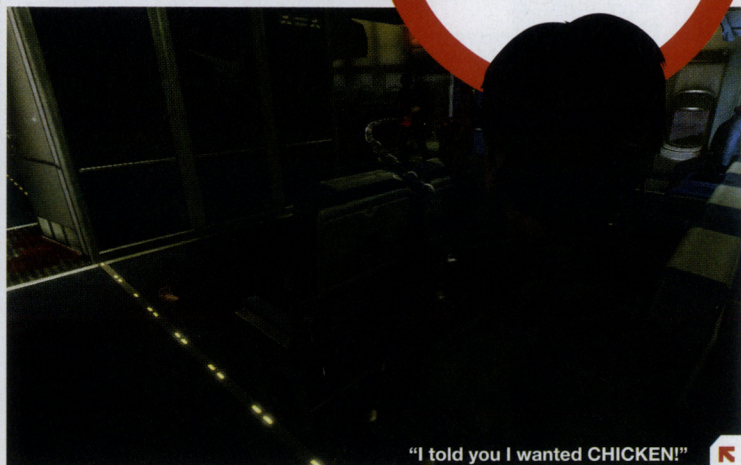
Replay value is pretty limited. There are unlockable modes of alternate play, such as Headshot Mode, where you have to kill a certain number of villains via bullets to the brain before you can advance. A similar mode gives Mr. Stabby the spotlight. These aren't terribly satisfying, since the game mechanics were pretty poor in the first place.

Likewise, the chance to play with different skins is a wasted opportunity. One such alternate character model lets you play as a large, fat, middle-aged woman. There might be some comedy value here, were it not for the fact that she has exactly the same combat moves, animations, and momentum as Wesley. A fat person shouldn't be able to move that fast. A 50-year-old woman shouldn't move like



**OH,
BLAST!**

Yes, you have the ability to curve bullets in the game. But this costs adrenaline, which you can only earn by shooting people. So you're generally only able to charge up the ability to curve bullets AFTER you would have actually found it useful. Genius!



"I told you I wanted CHICKEN!"



"I'm next for the bathroom!" "No, I am!"

a 25-year-old man. It breaks the illusion. It's pretty disturbing, really.

Come to think of it, screw RE-play value. There isn't much first-play value either – a determined, competent shooter veteran should be able to plough through the whole thing in four hours.

THE FINAL INSULT

And in case you were under the impression that the game merely insulted the player in a broad, general sense, by not being nearly as good entertainment or value as almost every other game for the system, *Wanted* also insults you directly, too. Wesley's first line in the opening sequence is "Once I was clueless and pathetic, just like you." Wow, thanks for the pick-me-up. He also broadly dismisses gamers as average Joes who surf the net looking for 'jailbait porn', yet his own oedipal fixations would raise more eyebrows than most of the stuff on *The Stile Project*.

This is a bad game, and its producers should feel bad. **James Cottee**

**FINAL
SAY:**

• A nice alternate costume or two

• Clunky controls
• Repetitive action
• Too short, zero replay

VERDICT:

Killzone 3 this ain't. Avoid.

5

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WORSE THAN
MSG: PORTABLE OPS

BETTER THAN
SEPPUKU



Tenchu: Extreme Dandruff

TENCHU: SHADOW ASSASSINS

A real stab in the dark

You've no doubt taken a look at that bright red '6' at the bottom-right corner of the page. Hardly inspiring, is it? It's the score equivalent of a bad school report when you just couldn't be bothered and would rather be outside than doing geography. 'Must try harder,' 'would improve with more application,' 'has the potential to achieve so much'. Plus, if you're judging on score alone – shame on you – it's the exact same score we gave *Tenchu: Time of the Assassins* waaaaaaay back in September '06. So, no improvement then? Well, you're wrong. That '6' in the corner is much better than the other three year old '6'. Still, rules are rules, both in this world and the world of *Tenchu*, and it's these rules that will either repel you or drive you on as you grimace and bear it.

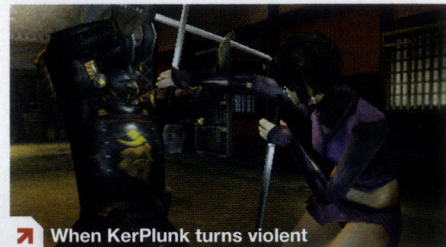
The subtitle, *Shadow Assassins*,

is apt. The aim of the game is, obviously, to sneak around and not be discovered whilst slinking to the goal and assassinating as many chumps as possible. The shadows, represented by a swirling mist that usually hugs walls and crevices not infiltrated by light, keep you out of enemy sight. There's plenty of shrubbery, nooks and walkways to crawl through, in and under that will take you out of the light and successfully sneak up on a bandit and snap his neck, or slice him apart with his own sword. If there's too much light, simply blow out the candles, or douse them with water. Candle's too far away? Knock it out with a shuriken. It might sound dynamic but *Tenchu* is anything but, and will stretch your patience. You need to be patient to wait and watch the guards' patterns, and you need to be patient with the game controls and the whole mechanic of snapping to a wall, rolling between cover. Patient with the voice-acting, the accents, the dialogue and repetition. It's racked with inconsistencies. Two guards heard a cat mewling gently on the other side of a wall that Rikimaru, one of the protagonists, disturbed several body lengths away from where they were, and

called out for him to show himself. Yet, when he crept around behind the guards and snapped the neck of the bloke on the left, his partner – who was so close he could've been holding his hand – didn't react. You'll frequently have to wade through water, and though you're splashing around no-one will notice. While it's possible to hide in an urn, kill an enemy from within and then stash his body in it, you can't kill him as you normally would and then put him in the urn. This is an embarrassment, forcing linearity in a game that is already painfully linear and spoon-feeds the answers as you go.

Get through the first two or three levels though and it does improve. You're familiar with the sticky controls, accepting of the repetitive Quick Time Events, paradox of the guards' selective myopia and deafness, limited vocabulary, and *Tenchu* becomes mildly fun.

In the end, though, it's not a ninja game: it's a badly implemented set of obstinate rules. Fans (if there are any left) will see that the spirit of *Tenchu* has been diluted and doesn't allow for enough creativity, exploration or freedom. Not even the capable graphics and excellent musical score can save this, which is a shame. Must try harder, *Tenchu*. **A-** Paul Taylor



When KerPlunk turns violent

GUIDED BY VOICES

On your journey you'll be instructed by Rikimaru's inner voice (an ongoing tutorial, basically), who sounds a lot like a 1920s mobster. Other aural highlights include a bloke who often mumbles "What's that smell? Oh, it's me." Genius.

The crotch-punching minigame



Time to go...



FINAL SAY:

- Excellent music and passable graphics
- Does improve as you get further...

- ...but only just.
- Excruciatingly linear

VERDICT:

Tenchu's in a dire need to go back to its roots.

6

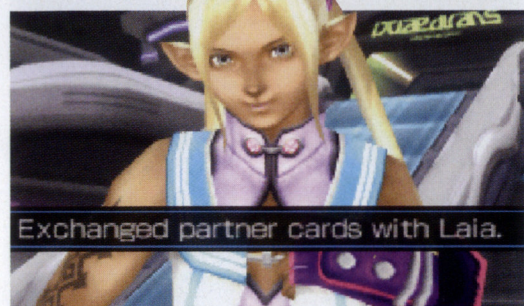
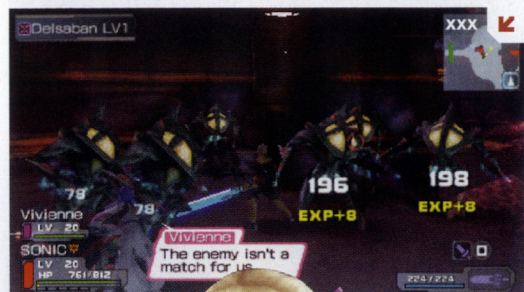


INFO

FORMAT: PSP
GENRE: ACTION
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT
DEVELOPER: ACQUIRE
PLAYERS: 1
PRICE: \$69.95

ROBO MAID

Early in the game you're assigned a robotic maid. Pliant, servile, and emotionally detached, she'll follow you into battle, performing the tactical role you choose for her (ranged attacks, healing, etc). She also cleans your room.



INFO

FORMAT: PSP
GENRE: RPG
RELEASE: NOW
PUBLISHER: SEGA
DEVELOPER: SONIC TEAM
PLAYERS: 1-4
PRICE: \$69.95

IN REVIEW

Phantasy Star Portable

SHADOW

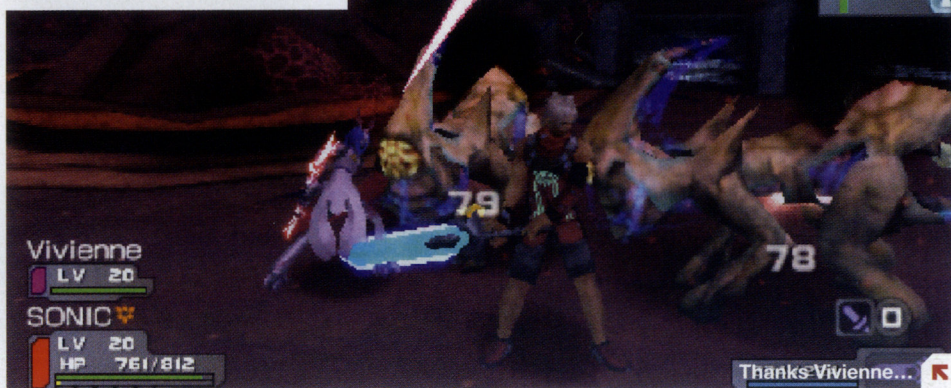
LV 20

TAILS

LV 20

KNUCKLES

LV 20



WORSE THAN
PERSONA 4

BETTER THAN
VALHALLA KNIGHTS

PHANTASY STAR PORTABLE

It's like 'World of Warcraft'. With furries...

Technology has evolved, but our brains have not. We may wear crisp tailored suits and work at data terminals in glittering skyscrapers, but the spongy tissue between our ears is geared for a tribal, hunter/gatherer, Congo/Bongo lifestyle. All our stresses stem from our outdated instincts; we're forever trying to bang round pegs into square holes.

At a deep, primal level, we need to grind. Hence one of the most enduring game designs is the 'Rogue-like' — *Diablo* set the standard, and *World of Warcraft* added social online multiplayer. The core strength of *Phantasy Star Portable* is that it offers both of these styles of play, so you can grind away alone with pretend, AI friends, or team up wirelessly with real ones.

The core weakness of PSP for PSP is that it's from Japan, and thus comes overloaded with fruity cultural baggage. Characters bow to each other when greeting, ritually exchange business cards, have tasteful potted plants in every room, and listen to a kind of synthetic op-

eratic rock elevator music at all times.

Cutting with the grain, as woodwork teachers always advise, its creators have set the game in an alien star system, far in the future. The planets of Parum, Moa-toob, and Neudaiz are home to four humanoid races: Human, Newman (space elves), CAST (robots), and Beast (furries). Your own character can be any of the above, male or female, and one of three basic character classes to start with.

Beyond race and class, the range of purely aesthetic options is staggering — for instance, 13 different kinds of eyebrows. Most of these tweaks are far too small to discern in the standard third-person view, but when choosing from one of the 17 sound banks, it pays to get the voice just right. With a female space ranger, it's quite possible to alter her pitch until it sounds like each enemy blow brings not pain, but... pleasure.

Granted, there are tons of options for buying, selling, and upgrading weapons (one artifact for this task is cheekily called an Upgrade Grinder), but in practice

combat amounts to little more than running up to space goblins and bonking them on the head.

Oh, and smashing open space crates for space health, and hunting for space keys to open colour-coded space doors.

In terms of the actual gameplay, all the fabulous statistical complexity isn't particularly necessary. It's just been included to give you something to obsess over.

There are a few memory cheats, like airlock sets of doors to conceal when new areas are being loaded. Battle tactics are extremely limited, the monster designs are absurd, and the cut scenes, while fully voiced, are corny as hell. Heck, the protracted melodrama is on a scale rarely seen outside of those naughty Japanese 'dating sims'. If you're an obsessive nerd, then PSP has got your number.

Picture *Mass Effect* and *Diablo* — this is the worst of both worlds. But since both those games were pretty rad to start with, we're not really complaining.

James Cottee

FINAL SAY:

- Fairly addictive dungeon-crawling action
- Customisation up the wazoo
- Most of the complexity is meaningless
- Space-dungeon environments have confusing layouts

VERDICT:
Above-average
Rogue-like space
RPG action. More-ish.

7

INTERMISSION

On the box



CINEMAS DIRECTOR: J.J. ABRAMS | CAST: LEONARD NIMOY, CHRIS PINE, ZACHARY QUINTO | **IN CINEMAS:** NOW

STAR TREK (M)

We didn't think it was possible. We didn't think a *Star Trek* film in 2009 could be produced that would possibly appeal as much to the videogame generation as it does to the veteran Trekkies of yesteryear. But director J.J. Abrams – so hot right now – has done it. To the former he offers a frenetic pace, jaw-dropping action scenes and a sense-crushing visual and aural spectacle that out-does *The Return of the King*. To the latter, great casting (with special nods to Simon Pegg and Karl Urban), a script that manages to pander to nostalgia without ever feeling forced – and Leonard Nimoy's cameo ensures plenty of smiles. Also impressive, the film manages to spend more than half its running time introducing the audience to the newly renovated Enterprise crew, yet still getting a full story in there about

Earth's doom without feeling half-told or overly long. Sure the time-twisting narrative lacks any real meat – with Eric Bana's protagonist Nero really only around as an excuse to bond our heroes together – and tiptoes in cliché, but you won't care. After decades of seeing the *Star Trek* brand warp further and further up its own geek hole with an ever more soulless array of butt-ugly aliens, the new Trek brings back the heart and the humour which boldly took the original where no cardboard cut-out had gone before.



ALSO IN CINEMAS...

Night At The Museum 2 (TBC)

Director: Shawn Levy

Cast: Ben Stiller, Owen Wilson, Robin Williams

Peculiar hi-jinks set after dark with Stiller at his bumbling best, fending off stuffed animals and other inanimate characters as the Museum of Natural History is closed for repair and the exhibits are moved to the Smithsonian Institution. Light-hearted comedy, guaranteed.

Angels and Demons (TBC)

Director: Ron Howard

Cast: Tom Hanks, Ewan McGregor

More airport-fiction fare capitalising on the success of a commercially successful novel that had more holes than a cheese grater. Bound to rake in squillions, we suspect.

Vampire Killers (TBC)

Director: Phil Claydon

Cast: Paul McGann, James Corden

Are they lesbians who kill vampires, or perhaps killers of lesbian vampires? Or is a shopping list for a lesbian, a vampire and some killers? Oh, semantics!



THE BUZZ What's really going on behind-the-scenes

Regardless of your opinion of the *The Pirates of the Caribbean* trilogy, it's a fact that it's dumped more than US\$2.7 billion into the Disney coffers, thanks in no small part to director Gore Verbinski, whose previous work includes the so-so American remake of the

excellent Japanese horror film, *The Ring* and the lacklustre *The Weatherman*. What's more startling than Verbinski being chosen to handle *Pirates* is that the films were initially based on a theme park ride of the same name. Despite this unlikely string of success,

Verbinski's knocked back the opportunity to direct the fourth *Pirates* movie, and is instead focusing on the *BioShock* movie. Games-to-films are generally crap, but we're curious to see if Gore can do the impossible again. We'll let you know in 2010.

BLU-RAY DIRECTORS: PAUL HAGGIS | CAST: DON CHEADLE, SANDRA BULLOCK, MATT DILLON, RYAN PHILIPPE, BRENDAN FRASER

CRASH (MA15+)



Set in present-day Los Angeles, *Crash* is about race; how people are perceived by others and how they perceive themselves – plus it throws a couple of curly questions towards the viewer and their presumptions and unconscious discriminations. Sure, it's heavily weighted towards an American audience but this is a brilliant film and it's held up well since its 2004 cinema release.

There are about nine different overlapping and intersecting relationships, and each of them is given equal weight over 115 minutes. Some of the characters are more flawed than others, and a couple invoke rage – Matt Dillon's role as the blatantly racist cop, and Sandra Bullock (in her least annoying role ever) as the wife of a District Attorney, will make you want to reach into the screen and slap them both. Still, redemption occurs – though the ending to most of the stories isn't happy or particularly convenient.

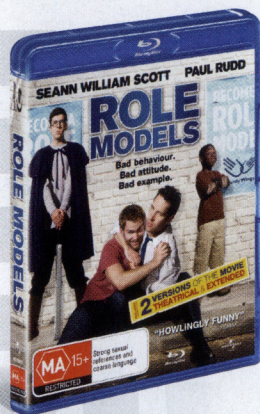
It's good that the movie is so solid, as the extras on this Blu-ray version are kinda anaemic. The main feature

itself hasn't changed since the DVD release from 2005, and while there are a couple more special features they're only passable rather than essential. Still, we can't recommend this enough.

EXTRAS: 4

VERDICT:
Challenging and emotional
– and that's just Don Cheadle.

9



ROLE MODELS (MA15+)

Director: David Wain

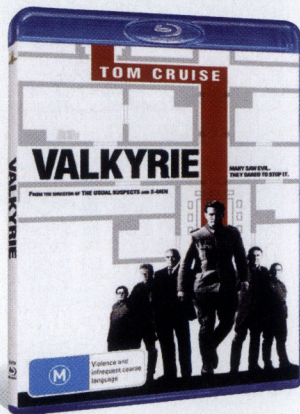
Cast: Seann William Scott, Paul Rudd, Elizabeth Banks, Christopher Mintz-Plassé

Two salesmen who trash a company truck on an energy drink-fueled bender must spend 150 hours with a mentorship program, instilling their immature wisdom.

EXTRAS: 5

VERDICT:
Rudd and Scott are on fire – seriously hilarious

8



VALKYRIE (MA15+)

Director: Bryan Singer

Cast: Tom Cruise, Kenneth Branagh, Bill Nighy, Tom Wilkinson, Clarice Van Houten, Thomas Kretschmann, Eddie Izzard, Terence Stamp

Based on the true story of the plot to kill Hitler. There has been some debate on whether *Valkyrie* is Nazi apologia or not, but there's no real doubt that it's story worth telling. It certainly was a big deal, at any rate.

EXTRAS: 6

VERDICT:
A serviceable thriller about an oft-ignored event

7



X-MEN TRILOGY (M)

Directors: Bryan Singer, Brett Ratner

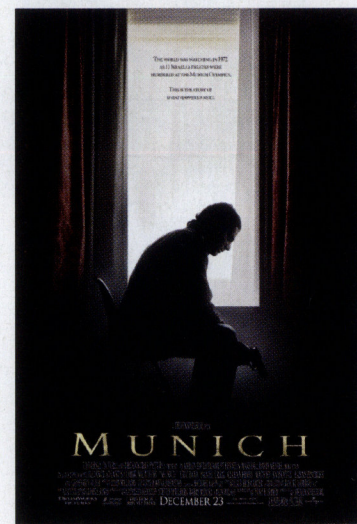
Cast: Patrick Stewart, Hugh Jackman, Halle Berry, Famke Janssen, Ian McKellen, Anna Paquin, Rebecca Romijn, James Marsden

The *X-Men* trilogy is easily the best comic book film around, *Spider-Man* be damned. This pack combines all three with a horde of extras and is a must for movie-lovers.

EXTRAS: 7

VERDICT:
A killer pack of superhero movies. Essential

9



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

MUNICH

This is what *Crash* beat at the 78th Academy Awards

On the box...

DVD DIRECTOR: OLIVIER MEGATON | CAST: JASON STATHAM, NATALYA RUDAKOVA, FRANCOIS BERLEAND, ROBERT KNEPPER

TRANSPORTER 3 (M)

Jason Statham, the most blue-collar Hollywood hardman since Charles Bronson and Steve McQueen, returns as Frank Martin, driver-for-hire and the best in the business.

A Ukrainian environmental official is being blackmailed into signing papers permitting the shipping of toxic materials into the region by a US criminal mastermind named Johnson, and Frank is forced into accepting the job of driving the official's kidnapped daughter – freckled redhead Valentina – from

Marseilles to the Black Sea coastal city of Odessa. On the chance that Martin should attempt to escape, Johnson has rigged him with a bracelet that will detonate if he happens to stray more than 75 feet from his car.

The film is stuffed with car chases and fistfights, and the schizophrenic editing and ridiculous stunts suit the silly attitude of a film that knows it's not high art.

The story really makes very little sense (why these crazy crims

couldn't just stuff the redhead in a room for a few days we don't know) and all the action beats were ruined for us by the trailer – but it's a tough film not to enjoy. Unless you're 80. Or have no sense of humour.

EXTRAS: 6

VERDICT:
Dumb as a post; imaginative and unpretentious though

7



THE SPIRIT (M)

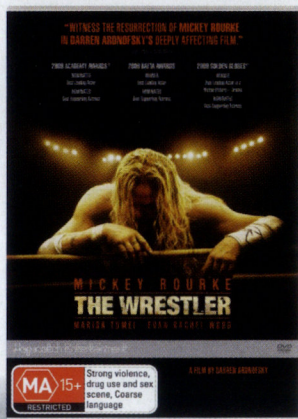
Director: Frank Miller
Cast: Gabriel Macht, Scarlett Johansson, Samuel L. Jackson

Denny Colt was one of Central City's finest cops he was shot and killed. Now Fate has brought him back as The Spirit, a street-hardened hero who must face off against a band of extremely weird criminals. Frank Miller's directorial debut isn't great.

EXTRAS: 5

VERDICT:
Odd, camp and, honestly, pretty boring

4



THE WRESTLER (MA15+)

Director: Catherine Hardwicke
Cast: Mickey Rourke, Marisa Tomei, Evan Rachel Wood, Mark Margolis

Randy 'The Ram' Robinson, a pro wrestler and major star in the 1980s, is years past his prime – but can't let go of the only thing he's good at. Powerful and poignant.

EXTRAS: 4

VERDICT:
Rourke really earned that Golden Globe

9



RIGHTEOUS KILL (PG)

Director: Jon Avnet
Cast: Robert De Niro, Al Pacino, Curtis '50 Cent' Jackson

Two veteran New York City detectives work to identify the possible connection between a recent murder and a case they believe they solved years ago; is there a serial killer on the loose, and did they perhaps put the wrong person behind bars?

EXTRAS: 4

VERDICT:
De Niro AND Pacino? This should be better

6



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

The Transporter
The original is better than the second one.

HALF-LIFE 2 PLUSH HEADCRAB

PRICE: \$24.95 | GET IT: WWW.STORE.VALVESOFTWARE.COM

This little guy has been around for ages, but we're finally thinking about changing the *Alien* facehugger that floats around the office for something similar that doesn't look so much like a vagina. It's freaking out the receptionist.



BIOHAZARD 5 ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK

PRICE: \$60.25 | GET IT: WWW.PLAY-ASIA.COM

Biohazard 5 is *Resident Evil 5*, and \$60.25 is a hell of a lot to pay for a CD soundtrack. There are three discs with around 30 tracks on each one though, so it could be a righteous collectable for die hard fans.



RESIDENT EVIL TEE

PRICE: \$20 | GET IT: WWW.80STEES.COM

Question: do you have a zombie escape plan? If not, why not? What are you going to do if a plague of undead flesh-eaters suddenly rise up and start filing into your lounge room? Get on it. While you're at, get this shirt, so you've got something to wear while you're smiting brain thieves.

3 E TEE

PRICE: \$20 | GET IT: WWW.EDESIGN101.COM.AU

The last time we wore this shirt overseas, a stream of odd dudes kept asking us if it came from E3. It doesn't, but that's where we're wearing it this year. Jeez, that's *where we're wearing it*? Kids, English class is *IV*. Who says you can't learn anything from magazines?



8" STAY-PUFT MARSHMALLOW MAN BANK

PRICE: US\$17.99 | GET IT: WWW.BIGBADTOYSTORE.COM

Stay-Puft is back, and this time he's here to steal your cash. Okay, mind your cash. Just in time for *Ghostbusters* on PS3, pick one up and you'll always have somewhere to stash all that annoying shrapnel.

F-15C EAGLE WOOD MODEL PLANE

PRICE: US\$159.95 | GET IT: WWW.AIRPLANEMODELWORKS.COM

Our moderate infatuation with *Tom Clancy's HAWX* is just about over, but our love for all things that fly and bristle with missile is born again. For an absolute fortune you too can own this model of the world's most successful fighter plane. The F-15 has never been shot down by an enemy force. One was shot down by his wingman, but that doesn't count.



INTERNET

Gaming, trailers, downloads, friends...

LATEST

Download this...

Wipeout HD



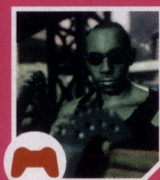
A free update adds rankings, friend invites, spectator mode and a few snazzy badges to this slick anti-grav racer.

Rock Band DLC



Pearl Jam's iconic breakthrough album *Ten* can be yours for \$17.40. 'Don't Stop Believing' is also available. Checkmate, GH.

The Chronicles of Riddick: AoDA demo



If our eight out of 10 verdict hasn't convinced you to pick up this stellar sneak-and-slasher, the demo might just push you over the line.

MotorStorm Arctic Edge video



An expansion to the MotorStorm universe set on ice in Alaska promises tantalising environmental scenarios and new vehicles for the PSP.

C&C Red Alert 3: Isles of Conflict DLC



Three more maps to bomb, blitz and release the bear on in this free update.

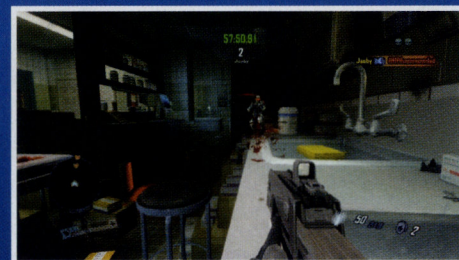
NEWS



F.E.A.R. 2

Sand!

Well, we would've filed this under 'Latest' but it's so big it deserves its own box. Paranormal fright-fest *F.E.A.R. 2* is about to receive a fistful of DLC where you're shrunk down to fit in a pinball machine, hospital lab room and a playground sandbox. The latter, titled 'Recess', is



up now, and we'll even wait here while you go and download it because the map is free to grab. It's great to see developers taking a risk and pushing their titles beyond the normal scope of the game's theme. Expect to see more EPA maps and single player levels, along with multiplayer maps and more.



KILLZONE 2

Metal!

Killzone 2's first lot of multiplayer DLC should be waiting for you on the PSN as you read this. The pack, titled 'Steel & Titanium', includes the Wasteland Bullet map and Vekta Cruiser map; the former is set on a bullet train between Pyrrhus and the Wasteland as two opposing teams must

battle for control of the moving train. Environmental obstacles add to the mix – being collected by an overhead object whilst on the roof spells instant death. The latter map is more claustrophobic as the ISA fight Heghast forces whilst protecting the cruiser from an outside attack.



ONLINE REVIEWS

RESISTANCE RETRIBUTION ONLINE

Resistance isn't futile



INFO

GENRE: ACTION
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: SONY
DEVELOPER: SONY BEND
PLAYERS: 1-8 ONLINE
PRICE: \$59.95



One of Sony's triple-A first person shooter franchises turned into a third-person affair came up trumps last issue. It's a little slower than its bigger brother but still a solid effort, but online never really builds up enough momentum to be compelling.

Retribution is a little limited when you look at the stats: capped at eight players per match, five play modes and five maps. Pick a side – either the beret-wearing Maquis or the Cloven, who are like the Maquis but with harsh voices – and jump in. Play modes include standard deathmatch, team deathmatch and capture the flag, along with Containment and Assimilation. Containment sees you defending your own power station at base while trying to take over your opposition's by, well, shooting it a lot, whilst Assimilation starts out with one player-controlled Cloven on the map who is set the task of converting all Maquis by, well, shooting them. The Cloven can re-spawn, but once you're converted you're stuck like that 'til the next round. Assimilation encourages pack behaviour; if you have your buddies backing you up, either as Maquis or Cloven, there's less chance you'll be dining on a bullet sandwich. Voice communication is going to be limited to players with later model PSPs, but this isn't a deal breaker.

Maps are based on the locations within the main game though smartly custom-built, as the single-player levels are truly linear. They're also small, but because of the pace your

avatar runs at they're not cramped. Still, we would've liked characters to be a bit faster; at the moment it feels like they're running about 15 percent slower than they should, and this sluggishness is compounded by the inability to jump or crouch at will. You're standing up unless you're behind cover, so make good use of your environment if you can. Honestly, this isn't much of an issue in single player, but multi screams out for it. Being peppered by a minigun or shottie doesn't do us any favours, especially when there's naught to do but feebly try to run away. If you're the one doing the peppering, however, it is immensely satisfying, plus you're forced to keep moving.

It's also possible to find enemies behind walls with auto-aim turned on, and there isn't a culture of 'must have on or off' unless stipulated by the host as a condition for joining a match. Good luck to you if you don't use it. The good news is that, as we go to print, there are plenty of players on line and many have racked up a bunch of points that's staggering at this early stage. There

are rarely any dramas when joining a match so it's definitely encouraging to see the community so healthy at this stage.

We're a little down on *Retribution* online, but it is a fun diversion. **Paul Taylor**

FINAL SAY:

- Assimilation mode
- Easy to find a game

- Not enough defensive options
- Limited modes

VERDICT:

Even with a full octet of players it's a dip in and out affair.

7

WE WANT IT!

The PSN continues to deliver with solid PlayStation exclusive titles and well-respected series for you to dabble in. Check out to expect in the coming months.



Rock Band DLC

It's still coming thick and fast, and it's never too late to get on the *Rock Band* train. Coming soon? Pearl Jam ('Alive', 'State of Love & Trust', 'Brother'), 3 Doors Down (Kryptonite), Blink-182 (What's My Age Again?), Tenacious D (Rock Your Socks), Jackson 5 (ABC) and many more!



Call of Duty

Rumour has it that this modern classic is making its way to the PSN sometime soon. The original *Call of Duty* snared a fistful of 2003 Game of the Year awards, and it deserved every one. You'll be able to see where it all began.



Fat Princess

Another RTS made for consoles with a slightly different take on the traditional 'save the princess' angle. We've been teased long enough about this – we want to see more!



The Punisher: No Mercy

A PSN-exclusive shooter with one of our favourite vigilantes, Frank Castle. Though the details aren't concrete, expect this to be an online-only affair, out in Autumn.

INTERNET

Gaming, trailers, downloads, friends...



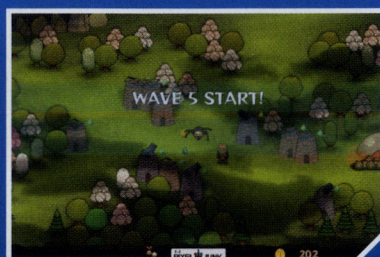
DATABASE

RUNDOWN OF THE BEST PSN GAMES YOU SHOULD CHECK OUT RIGHT NOW



1 FLOWER

A seamless experience unlike any other, and a tangible leap forward in design for gaming as a whole. A must buy. Former OPS dep ed Mark Serrels still has a semi for this game.



2 PIXELJUNK MONSTERS

Tower Defense mechanics and a surreal visual design combine to marvelous effect here. *PixelJunk Monsters* is about as finely tuned as gaming gets.



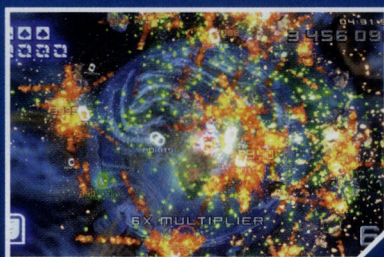
3 BIONIC COMMANDO REARMED

If only every retrospective remake was achieved with such loving, tender care. Demands all of your attention, though – so be warned!



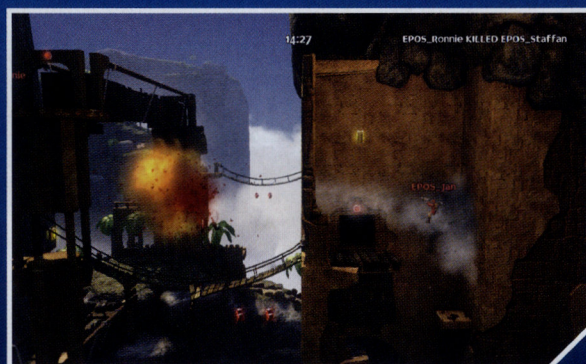
4 PIXELJUNK EDEN

An abstract reinvention of old school mechanics coated in a slick psychedelic sheen. Unforgiving yet magical. There's an extremely strong chance you'll lose hours upon hours to this wistful and relaxing interactive distraction.



5 SUPER STARDUST HD

The first dual stick shooter to really shine on the PSN, and rightly so – introduces enough innovation to stand tall in a crowded genre.



6 CRASH COMMANDO

Like *Killzone* in a can, *Crash Commando* takes the experience of your regular shooter, and shrinks it down to pint size with wonderful aplomb.



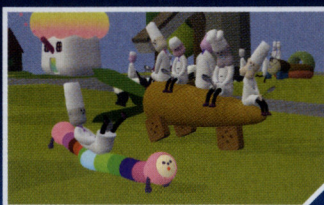
7 EVERYDAY SHOOTER

A tantalising maelstrom of sound, visuals, and a big apoplectic eye that shoots other eyes at you. Great stuff, must play.



8 SUPER STREET FIGHTER II HD REMIX

Unquestionably the best version of *Street Fighter II* ever. Yep, it really is that bloody good.



9 NOBY NOBY BOY

If you can make any sense of this, could you shoot us an email and explain it to us? Much appreciated. You accumulate points by how much you stretch during gameplay. Why? We really, really don't know.



10 FLOW

A precursor to the remarkable *Flower*, *Flow* is a strangely hypnotising experience. We're not entirely sure of the point, or whether there is one, but we know it's highly addictive.

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STAY ALIVE IN RESIDENT EVIL 5

Tidy tips to survive a new wave of viral horror!

Crooner Burt Bacharach once warbled, "What the world needs now is love, sweet love," going on to opine that, "It's the only thing there's just too little of." Clearly Burt hasn't played *Resident Evil 5* because, although there's very little love – there's even fewer bullets and inventory space.

However, fear not – we've come up with some tips, hints and strategies to keep your bullets, beasts and babes train on track.

BULLETS

Nine squares – that's your inventory. Now, you put a handgun, handgun bullets, a health pack, a grenade or two and a melee/bullet-proof vest (yes, apparently you carry your clothes, not wear them) that's filled up a lot of space – and that's just one weapon, chuck in a shotty and sniper rifle and you're all full up!

Trying to swap, give or take stuff with Sheva during the game proper blows dogs for quarters; the action doesn't pause, and these infected are fast.

Get yourself ready in the screen that appears between levels or after you've loaded a saved game/died and come back, you can bugger-arse about with

both your and Sheva's inventory.

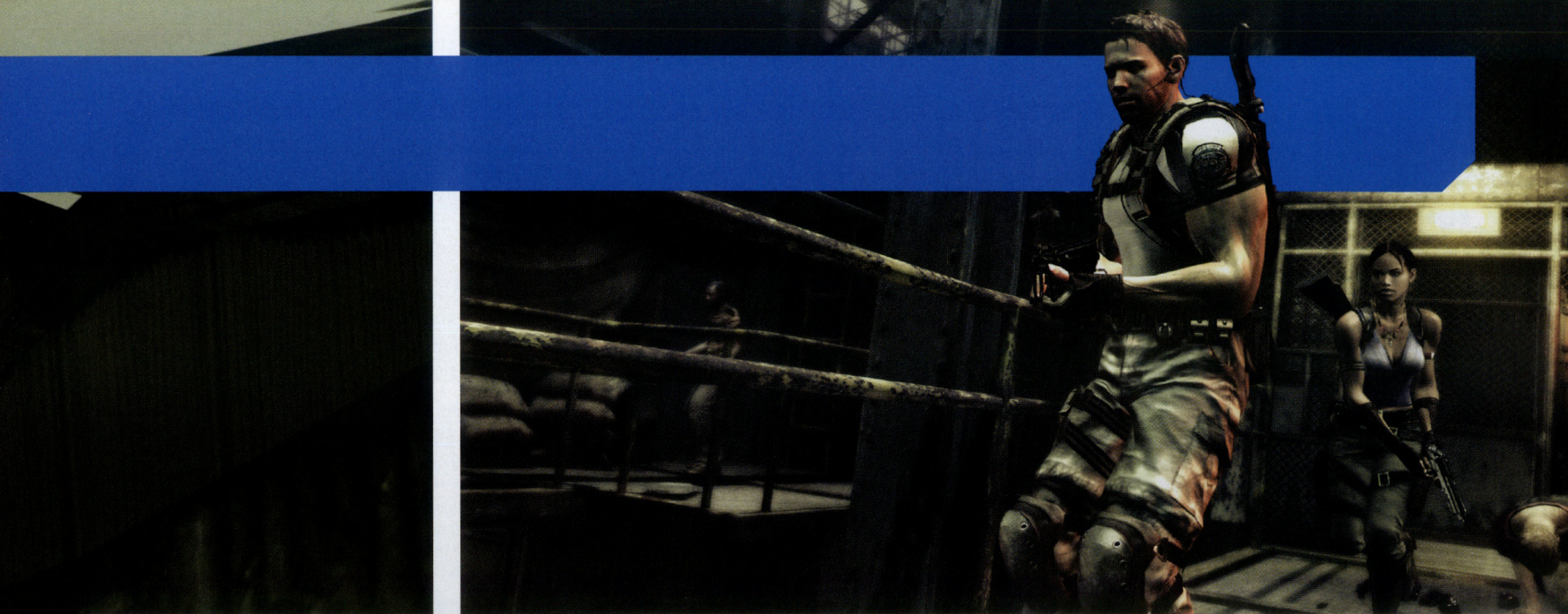
The good thing here is you have a third place – the apparently mobile box where you can put items – where they'll stay until you need them. Or combine them, sell them and buy new ones (there's a shop that follows you too – and yet nine inventory squares – bizarre) plus the other space where your treasure is stored, ready to sell. Quite why taking a caravan-load of gold takes up no room whereas an egg will fill a whole square is a mystery – but there you go.

Here's the good oil: don't be a shop-a-holic. Buying a new weapon any time you can will just lead to wasted cash. No, what you want to do is upgrade. Sure it starts out piss weak but if you keep upgrading the power and particularly the capacity of your weapon, you'll end up with a handgun that has the power of a shotgun and can hold 37+ rounds at a time. Use the shop, sure, but use it to make what you already have better.

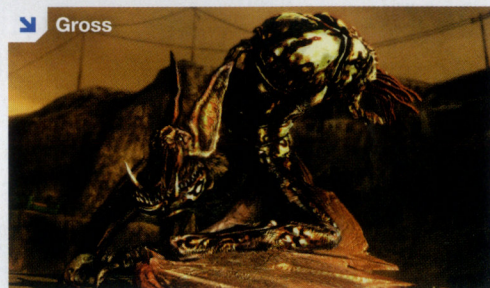
Also think hard about what weapons you'll need. This can be difficult if you don't know what kind of level you're about to face so, before you do anything – lob in. Get a feel for the level and either quit out or restart in the shop/inventory screen. You might think the level's not too hard so leave the magnum or grenade launcher behind. It may be a boss fight

How secret fishing spots stay secret

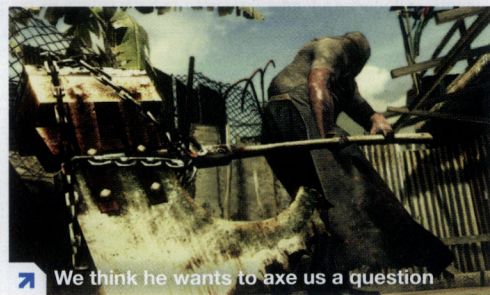




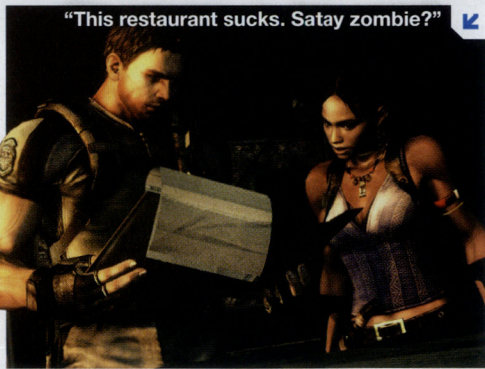
➤ Growths. Get them looked at. Really



➤ Gross



➤ We think he wants to axe us a question



"This restaurant sucks. Satay zombie?" ➤



"Seriously, this place has gone to the dogs" ➤

so bring only boss-specific weapons and health sprays.

Pay close attention to the stats of your weapons – and keep powering up the damage and capacity. A fully powered up shotgun will quite literally blow multiple enemies to pieces. It's quite a sight.

BEASTS

There are some really nasty horrors to face in *RE5*. Initially you'll be taking on first stage infected, where headshots or close range blasts – followed up by context sensitive melee power punches activated with the **Ⓢ** button – will end the fight pretty swiftly.

However as the game twists and turns there'll be giants wearing belts made out of human corpses (dead human is the new black), bats the size of trucks, hordes of infected who are in the later stages. Blow their head off and you'll either be accosted by a flying beast that bursts from their bodies or phallic, pus-filled tentacles that can bitch-slap you into oblivion. The main thing is to stay cool. Don't panic and use your best weapon up straight away. Try to pick a few off with the handgun, then make with the grenade launcher acid round, or rocket launcher or well-placed proximity mine. And that brings us to both the best and worst feature of *Resident Evil 5*...

BABES

Sheva. So pretty, so wild and untamed, so how the hell do you use her? She veers from amazingly intuitive to borderline retarded. The best way to use her is have a mate play co-op but if that option isn't available we suggest you give her the H&K MP5 (arguably the better submachine gun) and juice up the power and max out the capacity.

She can hold 100 rounds, which means when she picks up ammo it'll go straight into the gun – and not take up a valuable square. It's rare that you want her to fight, changing her position from

cover to attack, but it's nice to have the option – especially if you need to reload something big. But we can't stress enough how painful she is in the field. Try to get the health packs before she can because she tends to overuse them but if you give her a medical spray in the organising screen she seems to be much smarter about when to use it.

Also, help her when she asks because she'll do the same for you – it usually involves pressing **Ⓢ** and snap-kicking some infected dude or beast. And yes, you can use her as a bit of a pack mule – just don't depend on it.

If you're nearing the end of the game she's good for carrying extra flash rounds for the grenade launcher and she seems to learn what weapon you use the most and gives you the appropriate ammo.

Invest in Sheva and the result will be a valuable companion. Palm her off with a piss weak weapon and she's just taking up space. It's a fine line, but as long as she has a decent weapon, and maybe a few back-up pieces held in the storage area, she'll make sure you have a happy ending...

...of the game! Minds out of the gutter, readers. Now if you'll excuse us, we're off to kill some plague beasts. Happy hunting, kids. ➤ **Anthony O'Connor**

TOP 8 THINGS TO DO IN... RESIDENT EVIL 5

So there are menacing ogres with chainsaws looking to cut people up and sell them to Hungry Jacks for use in their patties? That's no excuse for gamers to forget taking a second bite out of *Resident Evil 5's* dolled up ghouls. To help keep things interested here are the Top 8 things we think players should experience with this pearler before throwing it in the game cabinet indefinitely to collect dust and grow moss.



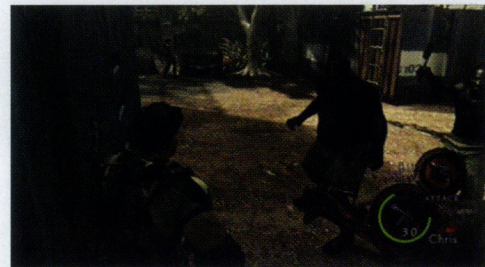
5 TAUNT THOSE BITCHES - THEN BLOW THEM UP

Be a real man and tell those zombies to pucker up for your fist with this tip. When confronted with a pack, press both sticks down to make your character taunt. This is particularly cheeky against the bigger, nastier bosses or when a huge mob is descending on your co-op partner. It's great for luring enemies over proximity bombs too.



6 GO POSTAL WITH THE ROCKET LAUNCHER

When you find the Rocket Launcher initially it's in chapter 3-1 on a sunken ship and good for only one shot. But beat the game in less than 5 hours and turn on infinite ammo in the Bonus Features menu and that changes. Now you can mope about turning the infested citizens of *Resident Evil 5* into zombie vomit.



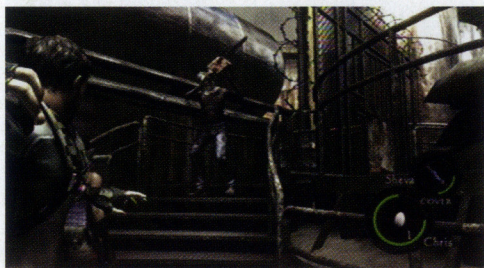
7 SNAG THE WORKS TROPHY

This Trophy can be tough to score, but it's satisfying. It requires you and your partner to put together a combo attack and can be done with the AI. You're best off focusing your wrath on a Big Man majini – one of the plump bald zombies from chapter 2-1. Make sure Sheva has no weapons, throw a flashbang at the Big Man, strike him, wait for Sheva to strike him straightaway, then finish him with another blow of your own.



8 CROCODILE HUNTING

Despite all the multi-headed mutant beasts in this game, it's the crocodiles tucked away in chapter 3-1 that provide the greatest tension. Don't waste the excitement by wading straight through the drink; instead stop to take a few on with your arsenal. Handbags or shoes anyone?



1 EGG A ZOMBIE

Games are all about suspending disbelief. What better example is there than to use off poultry produce to smite Johnny Jive, the ex-postal clerk, after he turned to cannibalism. Just know that the standard white and brown eggs you pick up off the ground are no good for damage. Instead you want the rotten ones that majini drop after chapter 5. Throw them to inflict 2,000 hit points of damage!



2 KILL THE FIRST MAJINI PACK

Show you've got more chutzpah than a hooker's bulldog by taking out the first band of majini in Chapter 1-1 with nothing but a knife and pistol. Sure you could come back later with the rocket launcher, but this makes it feel more like a brawl – just make sure you and hot legs are packing more green herbs than a Byron Bay poet. Kill 'em all and you'll snag a snazzy topaz gem worth 3000 clams.

3 SNUFF THE EXECUTIONER

He was the star of the game's demo, but this black-hooded executioner's arse has a date with your boot. Pepper him from medium range with your guns then go for a big uppercut when he's down. You're best off aiming for the legs and head, but be prepared to expend the majority of your bullets. When he goes down, his Gold Ring is yours. Sell it for 5,000 smackers.



4 GET PIMPIN' RICH

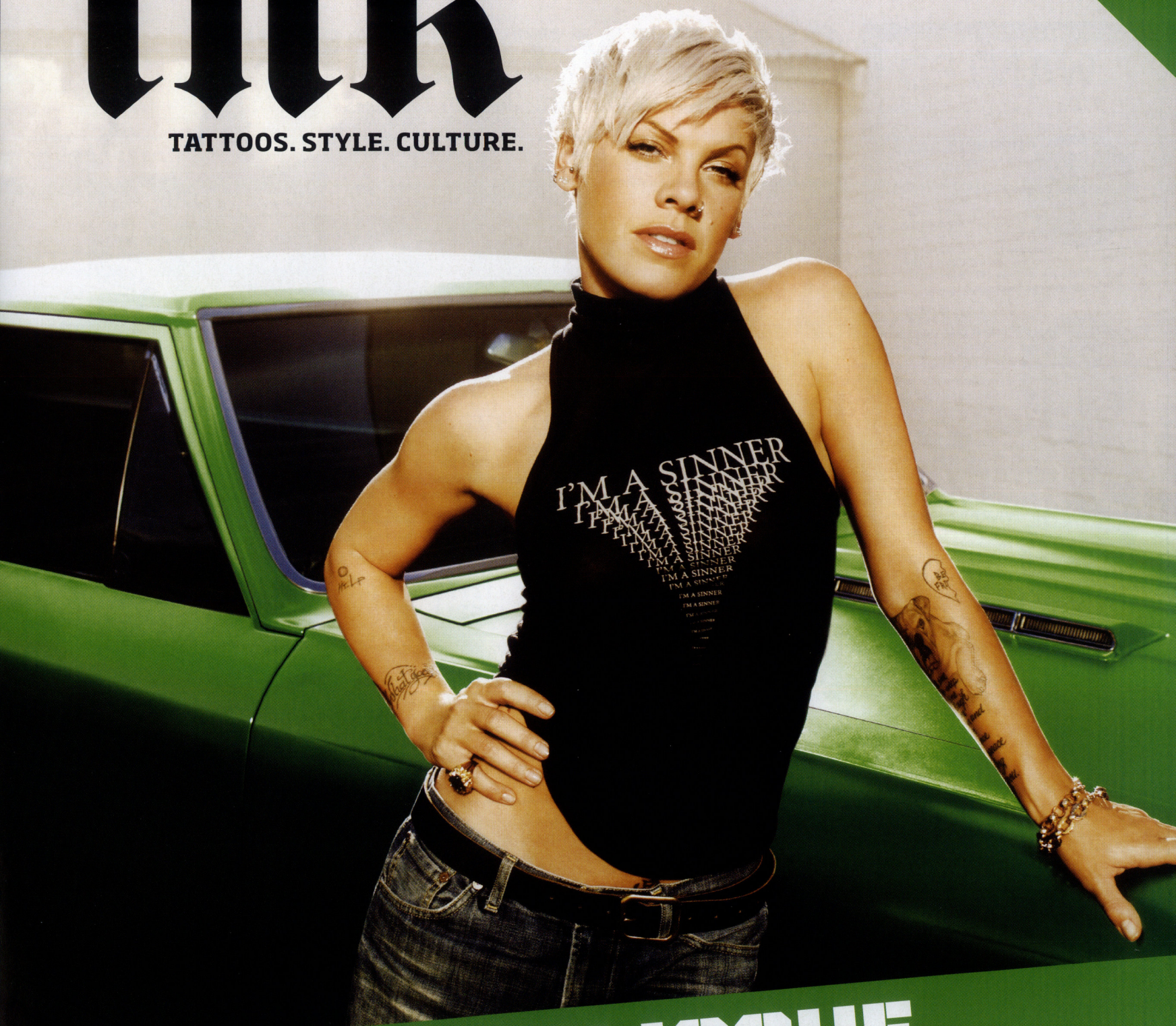
There are lots of collectables and weapon upgrades ripe for pillaging in *Resident Evil 5*, but you do need a lot of moolah. The fastest way to transform into the zombie world's Scrooge McDuck is to replay chapter 4-1, again, and again, and again. Find all the treasure and you'll score 47,000 *Resident Evil* dollars. Handy if you want the S&W M500 Magnum (which goes for 30,000 after fully upgrading the S&W M29).



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INDEX

All the games that matter on PS3!

WANTED

My precious...



BORDERLANDS

Damn if this one hasn't been gestating longer than a baby elephant! Still, we're finally promised some action mid-year, and when the words 'sci-fi' and 'first-person shooter' are used in the same sentence, along with 'four-player co-op', we tend to get a bit excited.



LEGO ROCK BAND

It's just been confirmed, seconds before final deadline. *LEGO Rock Band* – for families, apparently. It seems if it moves you can LEGO it – but we're hoping for build-it-yourself instruments. THAT would be cool! Plus the obligatory 'Fell in Love with a Girl' by White Stripes, natch.



MODERN WARFARE 2

The 'Call of Duty' has been stripped away, implying that this may be going its own way as a new IP of sorts, even though it follows on from *CoD4*. Promising more of the FPS stuff that got everybody hooked on the first, that's about all we know currently. Roll on November!



PROTOTYPE

Adding an exciting-sounding twist to the sandbox genre, whereby main protagonist Alex Mercer can shape-shift as he takes on a New York City infected by a virus that mutates genetic structure, this is looking like gory (you even eat your kills!) but awesome fun.



SIX DAYS IN FALLUJAH

Konami is flying in the face of accusations it's too soon, yet yays from many who've fought in Iraq, with the first game based on the optimistically-named 'Operation Iraqi Freedom'. A third-person shooter, it's being described as survival horror, just with an ultra-realistic twist.



VANCOUVER 2010

Why is it that the likes of '80s arcadesters *Track & Field* and *HyperSports* are still our most fondly remembered Olympics games? Eurocom, behind the hit-and-miss *Beijing 2008*, is developing the icy Olympics for SEGA. Can they break with tradition and make it great? Don't bet a ball on it.

SIMPLY THE BEST...

The best of the best of the best of the *best*

ADVENTURE



GRAND THEFT AUTO IV

"GTAIV is a game 10 out of 10 was designed for – a game that takes your rising, constantly spiralling expectations and vapourises them with a product so sublime you'll tell your grandkids about it."

DEVELOPER: Rockstar North PUBLISHER: Rockstar PLAYERS: 1-16

10



LITTLE BIGPLANET

"By rejigging the traditional platformer with physics and an accessible level creator, *LittleBigPlanet* becomes something delightfully simple and postmodern – a game that everyone can play, and endlessly recreate."

DEVELOPER: Media Molecule PUBLISHER: Sony PLAYERS: 1-4

10



ASSASSIN'S CREED

"Assassin's Creed is a masterpiece, plain and simple. This game wouldn't be better if Jesus Christ himself designed it. After *Assassin's Creed*, the world of videogaming seems like a different place."

DEVELOPER: Ubisoft Montreal PUBLISHER: Ubisoft PLAYERS: 1

10



MGS4: GUNS OF THE PATRIOTS

"An incredibly layered gaming experience that is almost inexhaustible. Probably the best game available on the PlayStation 3, and definitely the best exclusive. Buy and play this videogame now."

DEVELOPER: Kojima Productions PUBLISHER: Atari PLAYERS: 1-16

10



RESIDENT EVIL 5

"A grand, bloody, epic adventure. Loads of imaginative, beautifully-designed monsters, huge boss fights and action a-plenty. The controls are still archaic and the puzzles are rubbish, but it totally entertains."

DEVELOPER: Capcom PUBLISHER: THQ PLAYERS: 1-2

9



UNCHARTED: DRAKE'S FORTUNE

"The only bad thing about it is it ends, but hot damn it takes you on a transcendently enjoyable ride. There's no reason why you shouldn't buy this game."

DEVELOPER: Naughty Dog PUBLISHER: Sony PLAYERS: 1

10



DEAD SPACE

"The best survival horror title this generation – by an absolute country mile. *Dead Space* combines a smart story with incredible visuals, sound design to create what is arguably the scariest video game ever made. A must-play on every possible level."

DEVELOPER: EA Redwood Shores PUBLISHER: EA PLAYERS: 1

9



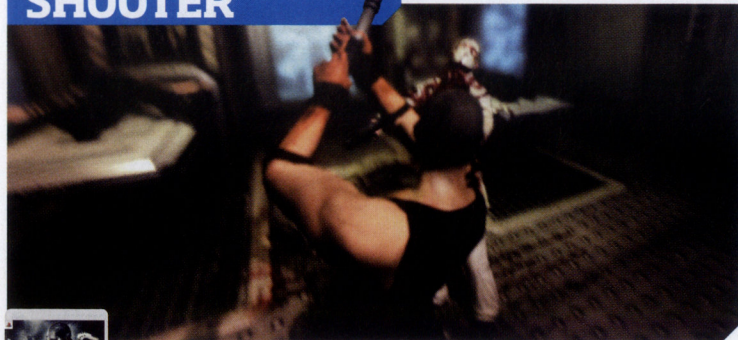
FALLOUT 3

"Taking the solid base of *Oblivion* and placing into a post apocalyptic wasteland always sounded like a great idea – and *Fallout 3* proves that concept brilliantly. This is a game that will astound you with the sheer depth and enormity of it's incredible vision."

DEVELOPER: Bethesda PUBLISHER: Bethesda PLAYERS: 1

9

SHOOTER

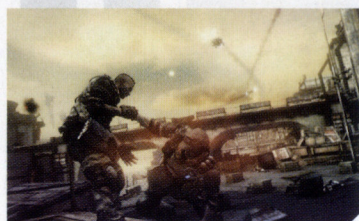


THE CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK: ASSAULT ON DARK ATHENA

"Worth your sweat. The combination of two campaigns equals a respectable 20+ hours of gameplay. A must for those wanting something moody and fresh."

DEVELOPER: Starbreeze Studios PUBLISHER: Atari PLAYERS: 1-12

8



KILLZONE 2

"Visually *Killzone 2* runs through the competition like a bull in the proverbial china shop. Lucky then, that the game's design and story matches the lofty production values. *Killzone 2* is the first-person shooter evolved."

DEVELOPER: Guerrilla PUBLISHER: Sony PLAYERS: 1-16

10



BIOSHOCK

"As a sub-par port, minus the promised extra content, *BioShock* is a disappointment. BUT you'd be silly to miss out on what is undoubtedly one of the landmark games of this generation so far. In many ways, this is a must play."

DEVELOPER: 2K Marin PUBLISHER: 2K PLAYERS: 1

8



CALL OF DUTY 4: MODERN WARFARE

"A fantastic shooter with a dizzying array of combat scenarios and packed with bleeding-edge military hardware. *COD4* is one of the tightest shooters we've ever played."

DEVELOPER: Infinity Ward PUBLISHER: Activision PLAYERS: 1-16

10



WARHAWK

"Tighter than a bull's arse on fight night and smoother than a glass of Guinness, *Warhawk* is a seriously superior piece of software. Multiplayer only, but you'd be barking mad to miss it."

DEVELOPER: Incognito PUBLISHER: Sony PLAYERS: 1-32

9



THE ORANGE BOX

"*The Orange Box* is ripe, in season, and packed with vitamin value. With five quality titles, including the sublime *Portal*, there truly is something here for everybody. An unmissable package."

DEVELOPER: Valve PUBLISHER: EA PLAYERS: 1-16

9



BROTHERS IN ARMS: HELL'S HIGHWAY

"Momentarily plugging the huge gap left by *Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare*, *Hell's Highway* works by ploughing new ground as a shooter. Well-balanced squad mechanics are combined with real intensity and emotion."

DEVELOPER: Gearbox PUBLISHER: Ubisoft PLAYERS: 1-16

8



BATTLEFIELD: BAD COMPANY

"Taking destructibility to a new insanely high level, *Bad Company* is a title unafraid to push new ground. With some excellent characterisation, and some of the best multiplayer in the business, it's easily the best *Battlefield* title on console to date."

DEVELOPER: DICE PUBLISHER: EA PLAYERS: 1-20

7



FAR CRY 2

"At times overstressing itself, *Far Cry 2*'s breath taking ambition can often be its undoing, but it's still one of the best shooters out there. Plus, setting stuff on fire is still a ridiculous amount of fun."

DEVELOPER: Ubisoft Montreal PUBLISHER: Ubisoft PLAYERS: 1-16

8

TOP 5

FORTHCOMING PSP TITLES

ASSASSIN'S CREED

We asked, we waited and finally it's coming. Yep, *Altair's* doing the PSP thing later this year, although details are scarce – meaning it may just be the same game PSPicised. Life could be worse.



INDIANA JONES AND THE STAFF OF KINGS

Yeah, the last *Indy* film smelled, but the whippy one has a decent track record games-wise, so we're looking forward to cracking it from San Fran to Panama in this all-new tale.



LITTLEBIGPLANET

Things are getting way littler, as *Sackboy* goes portable! We're promised the same style of play with new levels, along with the ace make-your-own-levels experience so loved on PS3.



MOTORSTORM: ARCTIC EDGE

The PSP is getting set to be pushed to the limits with a trip to slushy Alaska for all competitors, introducing hot snow-capable vehicles that have a new level of customisation options.



ROCK BAND: UNPLUGGED

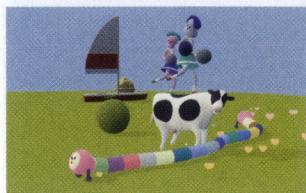
RB goes take anywhere, with this mix boasting most of the classic features of the game coupled with at least 40 original recordings and the ability to pay for more as in-game DLC.



INDEX

All the games that matter on PS3!

MAGIC MOMENTS



GAME: Noby Noby Boy
CONSOLE: PS3
YEAR: 2009

THE MOMENT:

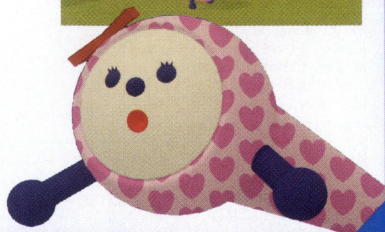
We played the *Katamari* games – BOY (heh) did we play the *Katamari* games – so we knew that their creator, Keita Takahashi, had a, well, novel take on life, the universe and everything. Forget your forearmed is forewarned stuff though, as our *Katamari* experiences didn't come anywhere near preparing us for *Noby Noby Boy*.

When it comes to headbunks, they don't come anymore bonked-up than the BOY. You're a rainbow-coloured wormy thing with a face one end and an arse the other called BOY, which can stretch and eat stuff, then fart it out. That's more or less it.

Whilst it could be argued that the *Noby Noby Boy* experience itself is one giant magic moment, naturally there are highlights within the madness. We were quite taken by the nudge-nudge-wink-wink of the stretchy interstellar size queen herself, GIRL, however for us the absolute defining moment of *Noby Noby Boy* was going all Doctor Moreau on one of the game's worlds. We were messing around with different dietary plans, ate a farmer and a strawberry then blatted out a dude with a strawberry head from our rotund pink rectum. How peculiar – and cool! That we received a trophy for it was just icing on a weird-as cupcake.

This got us to undertaking more experimentation – hello cow head man! But then, our finest creation burst forth in a cloud of flatulence. The pear devil! Yep, a green dude oogah-boogahing it up with a spear, whilst sporting a decidedly fruity noggin. Way to make Moreau our bitch!

Seriously, this is the most batshit crazy you'll EVER get for \$6.95. So, we salute you, Takahashi-san, for helping the world to get out of it on a budget during these trying economic times.



RACING



PURE

"Pure shot straight from nowhere to rub *MotorStorm*'s face in its glorious graphics and watertight gameplay. It's not as varied as its main competitor, but damn does it play well."

DEVELOPER: Black Rock **PUBLISHER:** Funtastic **PLAYERS:** 1-16

9

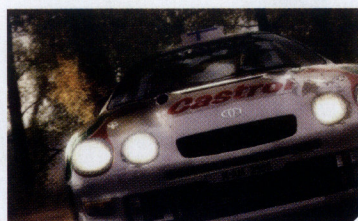


GRAN TURISMO 5: PROLOGUE

"An anemic game package that somehow survives by being what is quite possibly the greatest example of audio-visual excellence on the PlayStation 3 thus far. Well worth checking out."

DEVELOPER: Polyphony Digital
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1-16

8

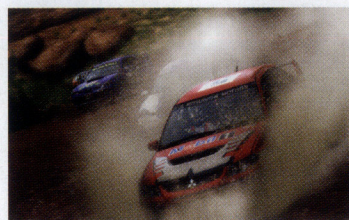


COLIN MCRAE: DIRT

"The great man rests in peace, but his legacy lives on with this stellar racer that brilliantly bridges the seemingly impenetrable gap between arcade and sim. A seamlessly presented title that juggles depth and accessibility with a precise gusto."

DEVELOPER: Codemasters
PUBLISHER: Atari
PLAYERS: 1-16

9

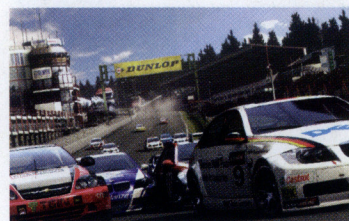


SEGA RALLY

"To appreciate *Sega Rally* you'll have to continually remind yourself that it's a deceptively life-like caricature of a hardcore rallying experience. Not brain surgery, but it delivers the fun in big muddy spades."

DEVELOPER: Sega Driving Studio
PUBLISHER: Sega
PLAYERS: 1-6

9



RACE DRIVER GRID

"This bastard rock n' roll son of V8 Supercars and Colin McRae: *DIRT* is hot. Your lower jaw will relax. Your eyelids will take five. And you'll start to drool. Shame it ditched its sim roots, but the missing in action V8 DLC has us all a quiver."

DEVELOPER: Codemasters
PUBLISHER: Atari
PLAYERS: 1-12

9



FERRARI CHALLENGE

"*Ferrari Challenge* will surprise you by being that little bit better than you thought it could ever be. A hardcore racing sim that thrives on the details, this is a suitable title to fend off the petrol heads until *Gran Turismo 5* arrives to rewrite the racing handbook."

DEVELOPER: System 3
PUBLISHER: Red Ant
PLAYERS: 1-16

8



MOTORSTORM

"In our humble opinion *MotorStorm* was the best launch title on the fledgling PS3 – and arguably it's one of the greatest launch titles of all time. Defining next-gen racing as a platform upon which smart AI and terrain deformation could thrive, *MotorStorm* reinvented the arcade racer."

DEVELOPER: Evolution Studios
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1-16

10



MIDNIGHT CLUB: LOS ANGELES

"Within its niche sub-genre, MC: LA reigns supreme. Well designed, rolling objectives, and an insane amount of customisation, MC: LA manages to rise above the rabble, easily beating off *Need for Speed Undercover* at its own game."

DEVELOPER: Rockstar San Diego
PUBLISHER: Rockstar
PLAYERS: 1-16

7



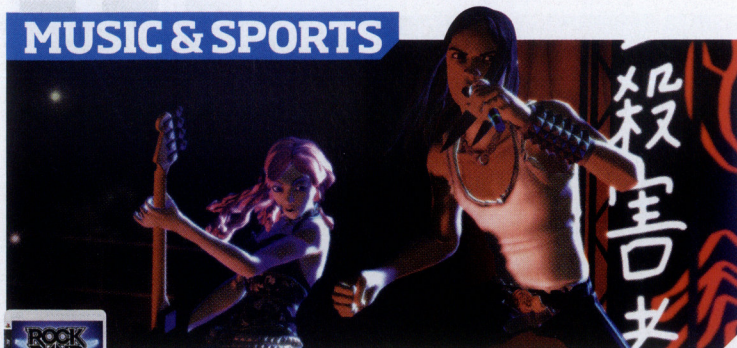
BURNOUT PARADISE

"You'll lament the thoughtless removal of splitscreen and the lack of a retry button, but you'll marvel at the slick frame rate, the sun drenched city, and Criterion's stellar commitment to free downloadable content. Awesome."

DEVELOPER: Criterion
PUBLISHER: EA
PLAYERS: 1-16

9

MUSIC & SPORTS



ROCK BAND

"A triumph. Harmonix has found the formula for a truly great music game – immaculate presentation, great tunes and a job for as many of your friends as possible. You wanted the best, you got the best."

DEVELOPER: Harmonix PUBLISHER: EA PLAYERS: 1-4

10



TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 09

"Golf, for most of the populace, is about as exciting as watching paint dry in an old folk's home, so it's testament to EA that this game actually works well."

DEVELOPER: EA PUBLISHER: EA PLAYERS: 1-16

8

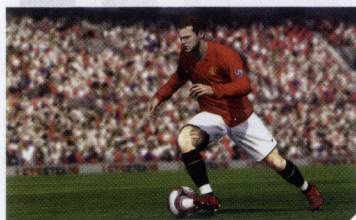


SKATE 2

"Despite some frame rate issues, *SKATE 2* is undoubtedly one of the greatest sports game's ever conceived. The controls are flawless, the city is dense, the balance is sublime."

DEVELOPER: EA Black Box PUBLISHER: EA PLAYERS: 1-8

9



FIFA 09

"With its new momentum physics, stellar visuals, and engaging gameplay, 2009 is finally the year that the *FIFA* franchise manages to leap the perennial hurdle that is *Pro Evolution Soccer*. Now Konami have to play catch up."

DEVELOPER: EA Canada PUBLISHER: EA PLAYERS: 1-20

9



STREET FIGHTER IV

"Capcom has been in the virtual brawling business longer than anyone, and with its vibrant look, online mode and pristine gameplay, *SFIV* is worth paying double for. Aquire on sight."

DEVELOPER: Capcom PUBLISHER: THQ PLAYERS: 1-2

10



NBA 2K9

"Basketball's hardly the national sport of Australia, but that doesn't mean that the game can't be fun. This is a decent representation of Barack Obama's favourite sport. Fans of basketball should check this out."

DEVELOPER: 2K PUBLISHER: 2K PLAYERS: 1-10

7



GUITAR HERO WORLD TOUR

"It's a tough call – *GHWT* blitzes *Rock Band* in terms of equipment, but struggles to match up to its sublime functionality. Still, it's an unmissable multiplayer experience."

DEVELOPER: Neversoft PUBLISHER: Activision PLAYERS: 1-4

9

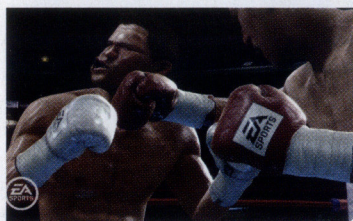


FIGHT NIGHT ROUND 3

"Featuring a dual analogue control system (that paved the way for the sublime *SKATE*) *Fight Night Round 3* is perhaps one of the greatest sports games ever conceived. Bone-crunching."

DEVELOPER: EA Chicago PUBLISHER: EA PLAYERS: 1-2

8



TOP 5

PAST PS IPS NEEDED ON PS3

APE ESCAPE

There aren't enough solid platformers on PS3. Much like rabbits without the fluffy tails, an epic *Ape Escape* could change that – and we're not even all that keen on monkeys!



EINHANDER

An absolute monster of a 3D shooter, that relied on mad reaction skills and on-the-fly weapons strategies, all accompanied by a techno soundtrack to shake any room. More!



GITAROO MAN

Almost on the same brain-addling planet as the *Katamari* games (coming soon to PSN – woo!) this combo of rhythm game and sheer anime insanity is still an absolute hoot.



OKAMI

Just imagine this legendary wolf-helmed, water-coloured Japanese arty adventure given a new story and the HD PS3 treatment. We're salivating at the thought – c'mon Capcom!



PARAPPA THE RAPPER

Boasting a visual style so unique that it's still got the funk today, this spin on the rhythm game thing has a lot to offer a new gen of punters – not every PS3 game has to be dour!



▶ "So that's where I left my sword"



2006

SHINOBIDO: WAY OF THE NINJA

The best stealth action game you've never heard of

Moody and atmospheric, dark and addictive, *Tenchu* revolutionised the stealth-action genre. It forced you to sneak around in the shadows, silently closing in on guards to perform one-hit-kills with your devious ninja arts. While realistic gore wasn't really possible on the PSone, it got by with anguished groans and horrible splattering as buckets of blood hit the tatami mats – exquisite.

Tenchu was years ahead of its time, yet its legacy has been tarnished by a string of middling efforts that did nothing to advance the genre.

We have From Software to thank for that – it snatched the rights to the franchise away from Acquire. Lucky for us, Acquire wasn't about to let a petty little legal technicality prevent it from making the *Tenchu* sequel we'd all been praying for. Just as Crytek sold the *Far Cry* name to Ubisoft, it turned around and made *Crysis*, Acquire made an awesome new ninja game of its own: *Shinobido*.

The hero is Goh ('Crow') – a ninja without any memories of his past. While his occupational skills rapidly return to him, his identity does not, prompting him to seek out a set of enchanted stones that hold fragments of his soul. The long and the short of it is that Goh can perform

missions for three warring feudal lords, the objective being not just to earn their cash, but their trust, and thus access to the truth behind his amnesia.

And it's totally open-ended. You can overtly favour one lord at the expense of the others, or clean up all your dirty work as you go to maintain a veneer of plausible deniability. Once a mission is underway, you can complete it to the letter, or ignore it and pursue your own objectives. Most intriguing of all, you can directly affect the war efforts of the three factions. Sabotage one side's shipment of rice, for instance, and the next time you sneak into their castle the guards will be complaining about how hungry they are. And since they're no longer as alert, they'll have far more trouble spotting you.

There's a fully-fledged crafting system; gathered herbs can be brewed into healing potions, or knock-out drugs you can use to spike tempting rice balls. Nighty-night, Mr. Guard! Mixing things up is an assortment of minor factions, including a clan of saucy lady ninjas. You can even set up booby traps to nail any bandits who might try to rob your ninja shack between missions. It's a huge world, with huge possibilities – and like all the best games, the more you put in, the more you get out.

What stopped *Shinobido* from becoming a blockbuster? Its controls were less than perfect; smooth, but with the occasional glitch. No doubt many a gamer – and gaming journalist – played it for a little while and gave up, long before its non-linear majesty had completely opened up to them.

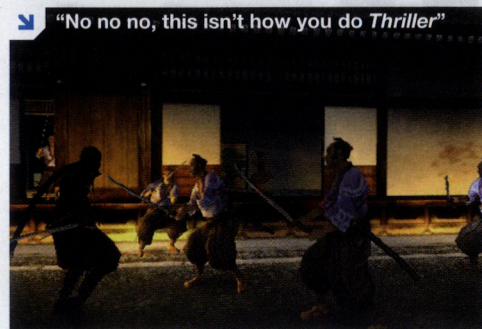
We know, we know – a huge time commitment like *Shinobido* may not be that appealing, especially if you've got a stack of a dozen games that you're 'getting around to someday'. But if you let it sneak in to your leisure time, *Shinobido* may just steal... your heart.

▶ James Cottee

▶ The cameraman wisely decided to duck



▶ "No no no, this isn't how you do Thriller"



DETAILS

CONSOLE: PS2
DEVELOPER: ACQUIRE
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: JAPAN
CURRENT APPROXIMATE PRICE: \$15 (EBAY) \$75 (JB)



AMERICAN NINJA

While it's usually the European territories that get shafted with the release of obscure games, the worm turned with *Shinobido*. It was released in July '06 across Australasia, yet the Americans missed out completely. Distraught, Yankee *Tenchu* fans were forced to go to extraordinary lengths to get their fix, importing both the software and the hardware to play it at great expense. We shouldn't gloat, though – the Japanese were able to buy an expansion pack containing 150 of the best stages made with the built-in level editor.



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PA77521 - MISS UK STRIP	PA80443 - 3 MIN STRIP
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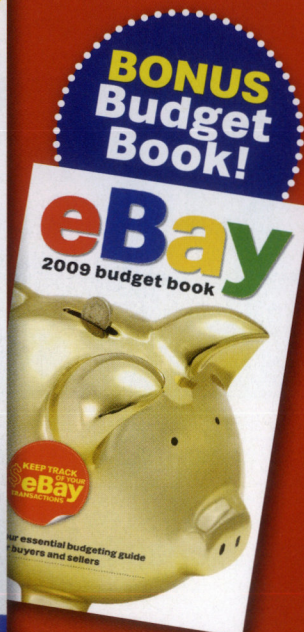
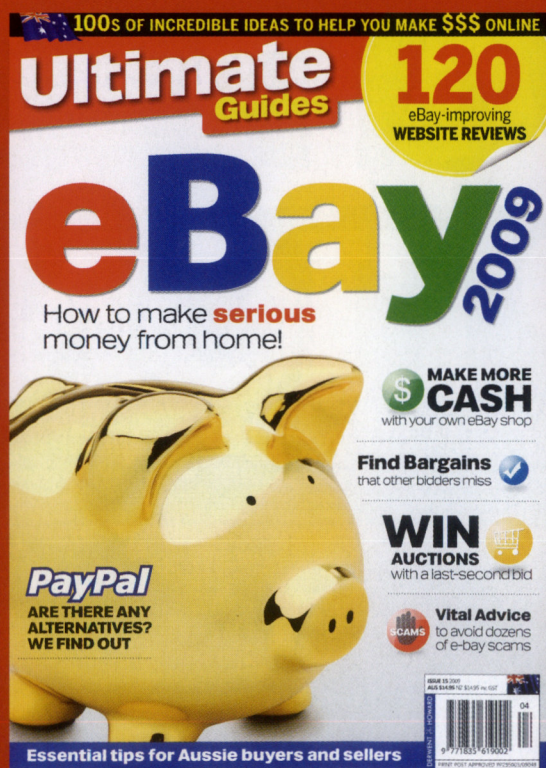


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Dead Rising 2

FIFA 10

The Saboteur

Need for Speed Shift

... and more!

REVEALED!

RED DEAD REDEMPTION

GTA takes a trip back in time in Rockstar's wild wild western epic!

PlayStation
Official Magazine - Australia

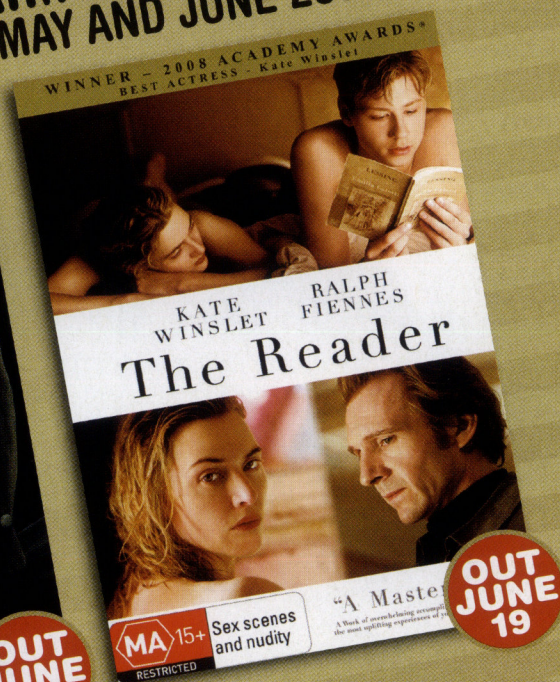
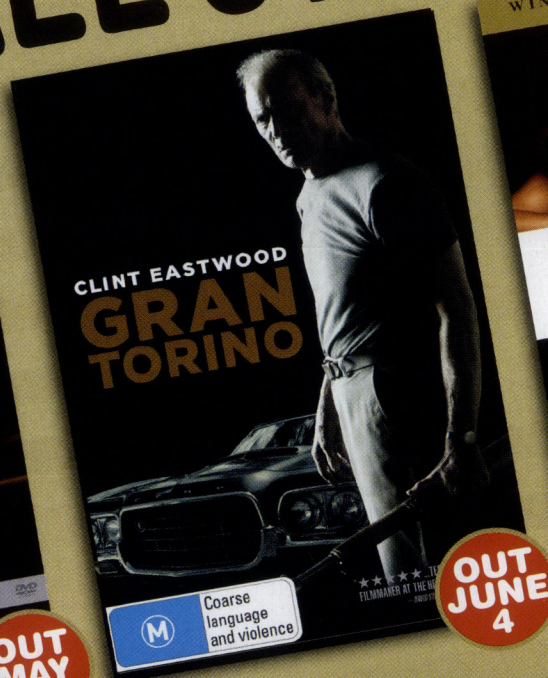
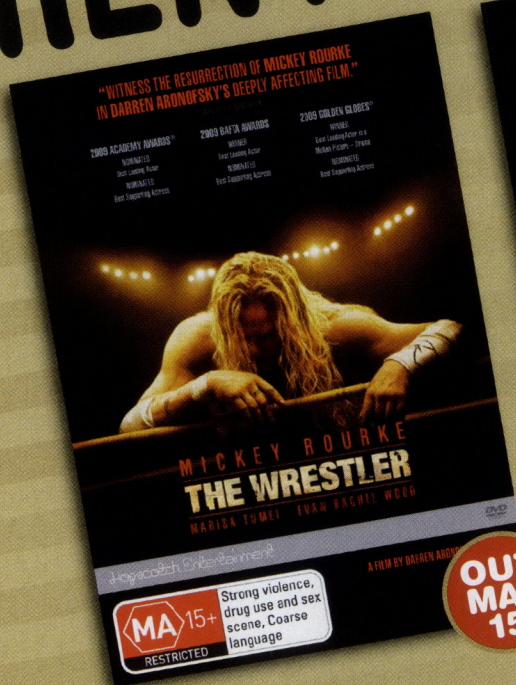
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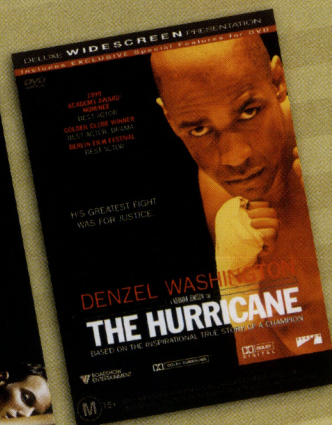
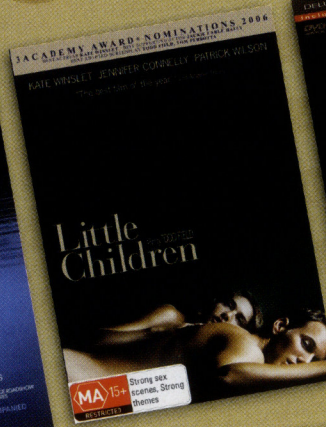
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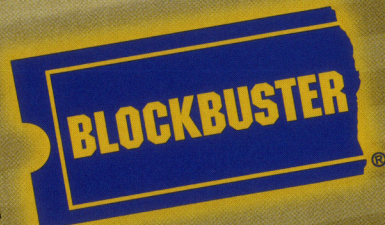
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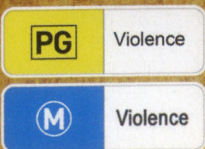


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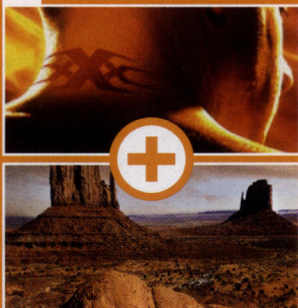


CHASE DOWN DA CHOPPA!

To round out the robust racing sections, there's also a challenge mode. Here specific conditions have to be met to advance, and earn you that fuel for upgrades. Chopper Chase is one of our faves, and feels inspired by the *Top Gear* boys. You've got 5kms to out race the chopper to the finish line. Take any route you want, pick your path – just get there before he does by any means necessary to score the win.

IT'S LIKE...

XXX



No roads

PS3 GENRE: RACING | RELEASE: MAY 2009 | DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI | DEVELOPER: ASOBO STUDIOS

FUEL

Time to rock the double Viking... yeeaaaahhhh!

Bikes. They kill you

Ever since our good buddy Vin Diesel popped a superman jump over an exploding compound, we've been fascinated by the extreme sports, and the extreme dudes that go... extreme. Rather than take the path (or any path) that its peers *Pure* or *MotorStorm* did, *Fuel* lets you forge your own path, like *Burnout Paradise*, offering a level of unbridled freedom we haven't really seen before.

Right off the bat, we've gotta say this is a sweet looking title. From the harsh arid deserts, to coastal romps, through smoking forests, it's so goddamned pretty – easily on par with its counterparts. Giving you a 5000 square mile sandbox leaves a bucket load of areas to explore and tear up. Based on American geography (it's Codemasters – those lads have been a little US-focused lately), you've got some wildly diverse terrains to cane through and some impressive environmental shifts.

During one of our challenges we watched as night slowly turned into day (oh, did we neglect to mention the subtly lit night racing?). We also couldn't help but veer off course when greeting by a spectacular sunrise seemingly birthed by the desert. Sure we lost the race, but the scene was more than a little memorable.

As far as your basic racing goes, it bears a resemblance to *MotorStorm* with a few key differences. Rather than blow up your ride for boosting, it's distributed here via the checkpoints, so depending on your position, the more or less boost

you get, which really makes you want to keep hold of first. The AI is bastardly, but the most important distinction is the pure, unbridled freedom as you plough through each event. The only way you can crash from veering 'off course' is if you land in the ocean. The breadth of freedom is impressive. You can choose to follow the loosely outlined tracks, pick a side path, or go it alone, as the crow flies. If you figure you know a better route, go for it! Their world is your oyster – but its no cakewalk either.

Taking the road less travelled has its own risks. Sure, you may be beelining for the finish line and ultimate victory, but you may be hitting sand dunes or weaving your way through a dense forest – which are equal measures of fun, frustration and challenge.

With a distinct, tatted-up alternative feel, freedom of movement and sumptuous graphics, were looking forward to our next little bit of *Fuel*. **Dave Kozicki**

WE SAY

- It's purty!
- Choose your path
- Alternate feel!

OPS IS... Pumped





GHOSTBUSTERS™

— THE VIDEO GAME —

COMING JUNE 2009

PLAYSTATION 3



PlayStation 2



XBOX 360 LIVE



Wii

NINTENDO DS

PG

Mild themes

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ATARI

AND THE ANCIENT



HEIHACHI MISHIMA

Origin: Japan (this is denied by Japanese government)

First Appearance: *Tekken*

Backstory: Founder and leader of the Tekken Force unit, Heihachi is a world famous teacher of martial arts. Heihachi was the creator of the King of Iron First Tournament and only did so to lure out and test the strength of his despised son, Kazuya.



KAZUYA MISHIMA

Origin: Japan
First Appearance: *Tekken*

Backstory: Kazuya has become a cold-blooded warrior because of the heartless actions of his unloving father. He's the head of Mishima Zaibatsu, the group that sponsors the Tekken Tournament. The scar on his chest is a reminder of the abyss his father dropped him down when he was five.



LEI WULONG

Origin: Hong Kong
First Appearance: *Tekken 2*

Backstory: Lei is amongst the most respected police officers in Hong Kong and has developed his own form of Kung Fu that he dispenses alongside his personalised brand of justice. With a partner to avenge and suspicious information surrounding Kazuya Mishima, Lei is looking to kick arse and take names.



YOSHIMITSU

Origin: Japan
First Appearance: *Tekken*

Backstory: Yoshimitsu is one of those sneaky game-shifting characters that has been featured in both the *Tekken* series and the *Soulcalibur* games. In his sixth *Tekken* romp, Yoshimitsu is hell-bent on finding a new sword to replace the current blade that is driving him loco.



KING

Origin: Mexico
First Appearance: *Tekken*

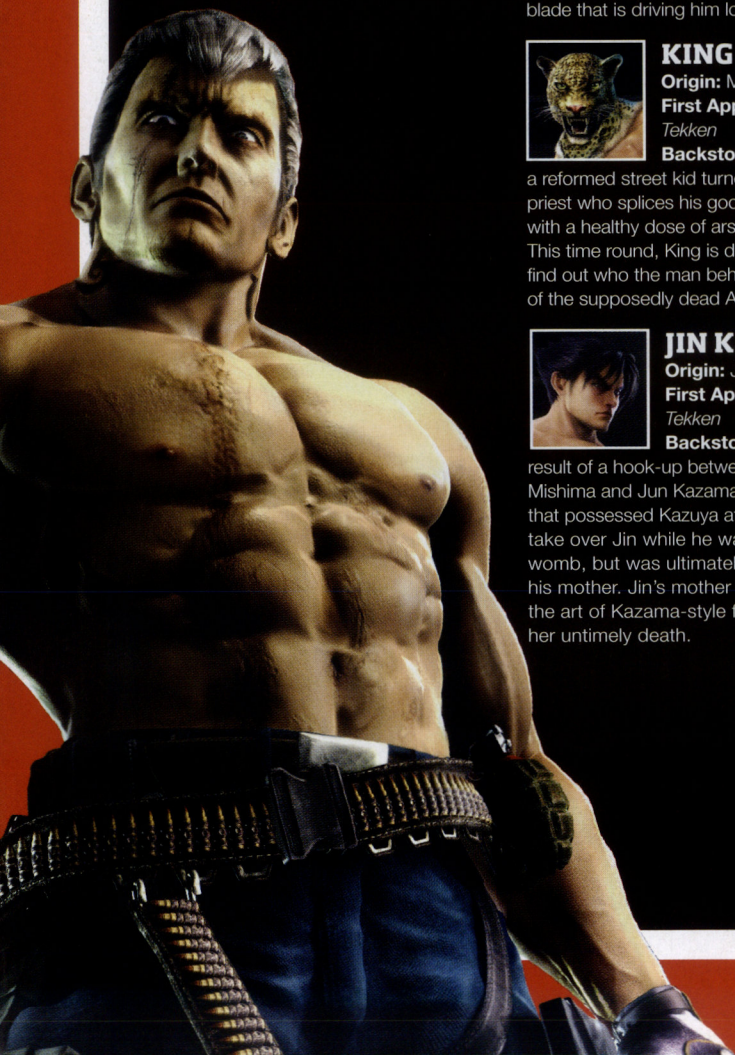
Backstory: King is a reformed street kid turned catholic priest who splices his good intentions with a healthy dose of arse-kickery. This time round, King is determined to find out who the man behind the mask of the supposedly dead Armor King is.



JIN KAZAMA

Origin: Japan
First Appearance: *Tekken*

Backstory: Jin is the result of a hook-up between Kazuya Mishima and Jun Kazama. The Devil that possessed Kazuya attempted to take over Jin while he was still in the womb, but was ultimately defeated by his mother. Jin's mother trained him in the art of Kazama-style fighting before her untimely death.



TEKKEN 6: BLOODLINE REBELLION CHARACTER PROFILES

When you've absolutely, positively, gotta know every fighter!

Fighting fans rejoice! *Tekken 6* is on its way to next-gen consoles and is a whole day closer to release than it was yesterday. The sixth round of Namco's popular head-to-head series is destined to be in a PS3 near you before the year is out and we've taken the time to get to know the new characters on offer, as well as re-familiarise ourselves with combatants of old. So let's take a look at what's motivating your old and soon to be favourite fighters in The King of Iron Fist Tournament 6.



THE OLD



ASUKA KAZAMA
Origin: Japan
First Appearance: *Tekken 5*

Backstory: Cousin of Jin Kazama, Asuka has a strong sense of justice instilled in her by her beloved father. Asuka was renowned for breaking up neighbourhood fights, but returned home one day to find her father had been kicked around. The suspect is believed to be in the Tournament.



FENG WEI
Origin: China
First Appearance: *Tekken 5*

Backstory: Feng is a master of the Kenpo fighting style and determined to be the strongest fighter of all time. After breaking the dojo's rules, Feng killed his master and discovered that to become the strongest fighter he must learn the secrets from the Shinken scrolls, taken by the Mishima clan.



KUMA
Origin: Japan
First Appearance: *Tekken 3*

Backstory: Kuma is a badass bear who found himself feeling rather grizzly about the apparent death of his former master, Heihachi Mishima. After having his furry arse handed to him by Jin Kazama and discarded in the wilderness, Kuma is back and looking for blood.



JULIA CHANG
Origin: USA
First Appearance: *Tekken 3*

Backstory: Julia is another *Tekken* character caught up in the ill-winds of prophecies gone sour. A shadowy, old woman warned her that if Jin Kazama and Kazuya Mishima's paths were to cross, we're all in for a world of hurt. Julia's fighting to ensure the pair don't get to fight.



PANDA
Origin: China
First Appearance: *Tekken 3*

Backstory: Panda's pastimes include looking cute, eating bamboo and dishing out ample servings of whupass. In *Tekken 5* she stood as the bodyguard for Ling Xiaoyu and was relieved to see the end of the tournament. Her relief was short-lived however, and she's back to pander to your fighting needs.



MOKUJIN
Origin: Oak Tree
First Appearance: *Tekken 3*

Backstory: Mokujin is a training dummy made from a 2,000 year old oak tree. After being deposited in a museum, he was brought to life by the awakening of the God of Fighting. He's sensed an evil presence in the air and he's back to axe his foes.



ALISA BOSCONOVITCH
Origin: Russia
First Appearance: *Tekken 6*

Backstory: Sure, Alisa may look timid and sexy, but she's about as human as a battery-powered 'man replacement'. She's been awoken from her sleeping beauty-like slumber in the basement of a military research facility. This android has a bunch of nifty mechanical tricks that will make her a tough opponent.



LARS ALEXANDERSSON
Origin: Sweden
First Appearance: *Tekken 6*

Backstory: The mastermind of the *Tekken* Force coup d'état, Lars is a youthful yet charismatic leader with mental prowess and physical ability similar to *Watchmen*'s Ozymandias. Lars is popular among his subordinates and a descendant of Heihachi Mishima, although his forefather is unaware of this fact.



CHRISTIE MONTEIRO
Origin: Brazil
First Appearance: *Tekken 4*

Backstory: Christie continues on the capoeira fighting style made famous by Eddy Goro. She's searching for both Eddy and her missing grandfather, who she learns has been transferred to a medical facility operated by the Mishima Zaibatsu. She needs to battle her way to the exact whereabouts of her grandfather.



BRYAN FURY
Origin: USA
First Appearance: *Tekken 3*

Backstory: Bryan is a character who's in dire need of some anger management training. This kickboxer is driven by rage and the desire for ultimate power. He's looking to share some of his angry feelings with the other fighters in The King of Iron Fist Tournament 6.



EMILY 'LILI' ROCHEFORT
Origin: Monaco
First Appearance: *Tekken 5*

Backstory: Lili is a highschool warrior who enjoys street fighting behind her daddy's back. Lili's father has recently had his oil fields taken over by Mishima Zaibatsu and is out of the job. His daughter believes she can win back the oil fields by claiming top spot in the tournament.

**LEO**

Origin: Germany
First Appearance:
Tekken 6

Backstory: Don't be fooled by the name, Leo is all woman. After the tragic murder of her mother, Leo took matters into her own hands when the police ended the investigation inconclusively. She's linked Kazuya Mishima to the murder and is out for blood.

**MIGUEL CABALLERO ROJO**

Origin: Spain **First Appearance:** *Tekken 6*

Backstory: Miguel grew up as a troubled boy, being quick to anger and even quicker to violence. He was kicked out of home at age 15 and only trusted his sister. That is, until she was killed on her wedding day in an air raid ordered by Jin Kazama.

**ZAFINA**

Origin: Unknown (presumed Egyptian)
First Appearance:
Tekken 6

Backstory: Zafina possesses vast spiritual powers and was raised to be the guardian of an imperial temple. A closet assassin and astrologist by day, Zafina has begun to sense evil omens and must find out if she has seen the end of the world in her premonitions.

**BOB**

Origin: USA
First Appearance:
Tekken 6

Backstory: Bob has always been a martial arts prodigy, but found that his skills counted for naught against meatier opponents. He disappeared from the public eye and upon his return is now rather... large. He may look fat but insists that his power, speed and weight are all perfectly balanced.

**JACK-6**

Origin: G Corporation
First Appearance:
Tekken 6

Backstory: After the successful restoration of Jack-5's memory in *Tekken 5*, Mishima Zaibatsu took it upon themselves to create their own 'Jack' that is supposed to be ten-times more powerful than its preceding model. Jack-6 has been entered into The King of Iron First Tournament 6 to crush the Mishima Zaibatsu.

AZAZEL

Origin: Unknown
First Appearance: *Tekken 6*

Backstory: Azazel is the final boss in *Tekken 6* and a whole bunch of bad news. Not much is known about this towering character that doesn't appear to be human but is bound in chains and ice. Azazel appears to be linked to Zafina's end of world premonitions.

NANCY-MI847J

Origin: Mishima Industries
First Appearance: *Tekken 6*
Backstory: Nancy is a monstrous robotic weapon, similar to the robotic Jack but created from a different system by the Mishima engineers. As slow as Nancy may be, it's still a formidable opponent with resilient armour and weaponry aplenty.

**LING XIAOYU**

Origin: China
First Appearance:
Tekken 3

Backstory: Ling is the eternal teenager of the *Tekken* series who has a bit of a soft spot for Jin Kazama. Ling seeks to save Jin's soul but is finding it difficult to get near him because of the increased Mishima Zaibatsu militarisation.



EXTREME RACING EPIC SCALE FEARSOME WEATHER



75 VEHICLES

190 CHALLENGES

70 CAREER RACES

ONLINE MULTIPLAYER



ASOBO
STUDIO



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REVEALED!

TEKKEN 6

New characters unveiled!

HANDS-ON

GHOSTBUSTERS

Crossing the streams with New York's finest!

NEW INFO

MASTER OF PUPPETS

Get to grips with Overlord II!

FIRST HANDS-ON!

BATMAN: ARKHAM ASYLUM

The Dark Knight goes berko in his best adventure yet!

